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THE GREAT CHOLA TEMPLES

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THE GREAT

CHOLA TEMPLES

This guidebook on the three great Chola temples, built between the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram and Darasuram, along the magnificent Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu, is part of the World Heritage Series published by the Archaeological Survey of India.

All three temples are dedicated to Siva; and each represents the culmination of architectural and aesthetic achievements that came to form the Dravida style. From the imposing strength and exquisite paintings of Thanjavur's Brihadisvara, built by the great ruler and conqueror Rajaraja I, to the lavishly sculpted complex at Gangaikondacholapuram, built by Rajaraja's equally valiant successor, Rajendra I, and the somewhat more delicately crafted Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram- these temples offer a tour of an ancient and splendid history.

This volume also provides an introduction to the history and architecture of those times; it is illustrated with over 80 evocative photographs as well as detailed site plans and sketches; and its exhaustive bibliography will aid those who wish to delve deeper into the vast Chola empire that produced these three outstanding edifices.

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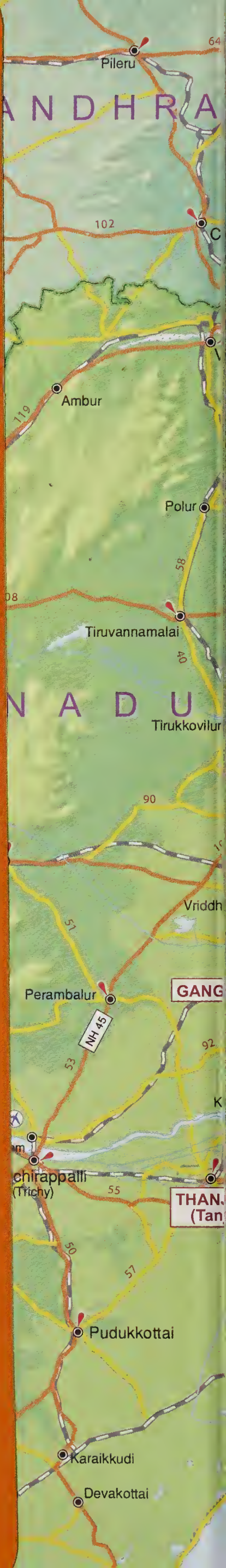

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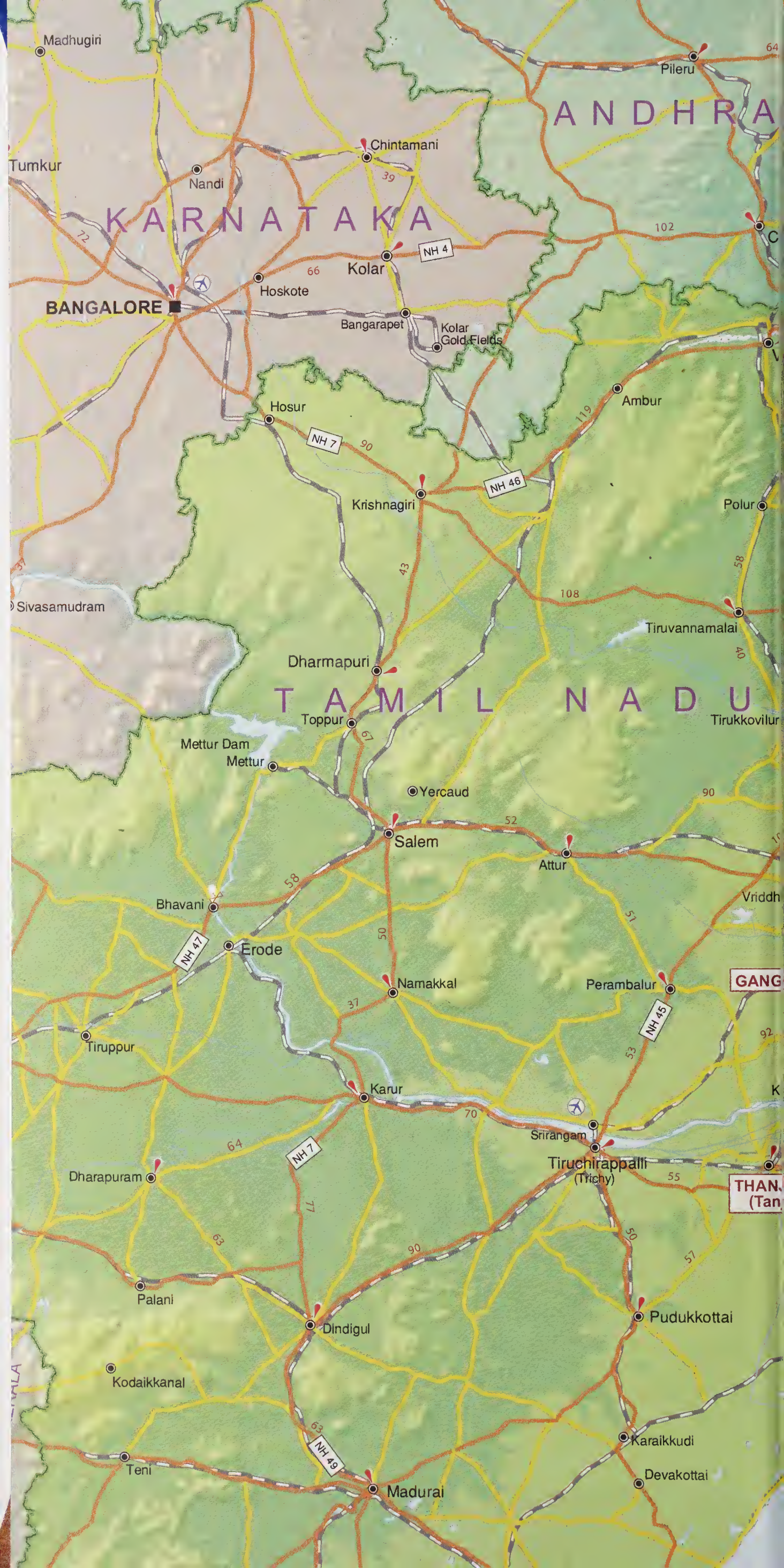
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THANJAVUR
GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM
DARASURAM

C. SIVARAMAMURTI

प्रत्नकीर्तिमपावृणु

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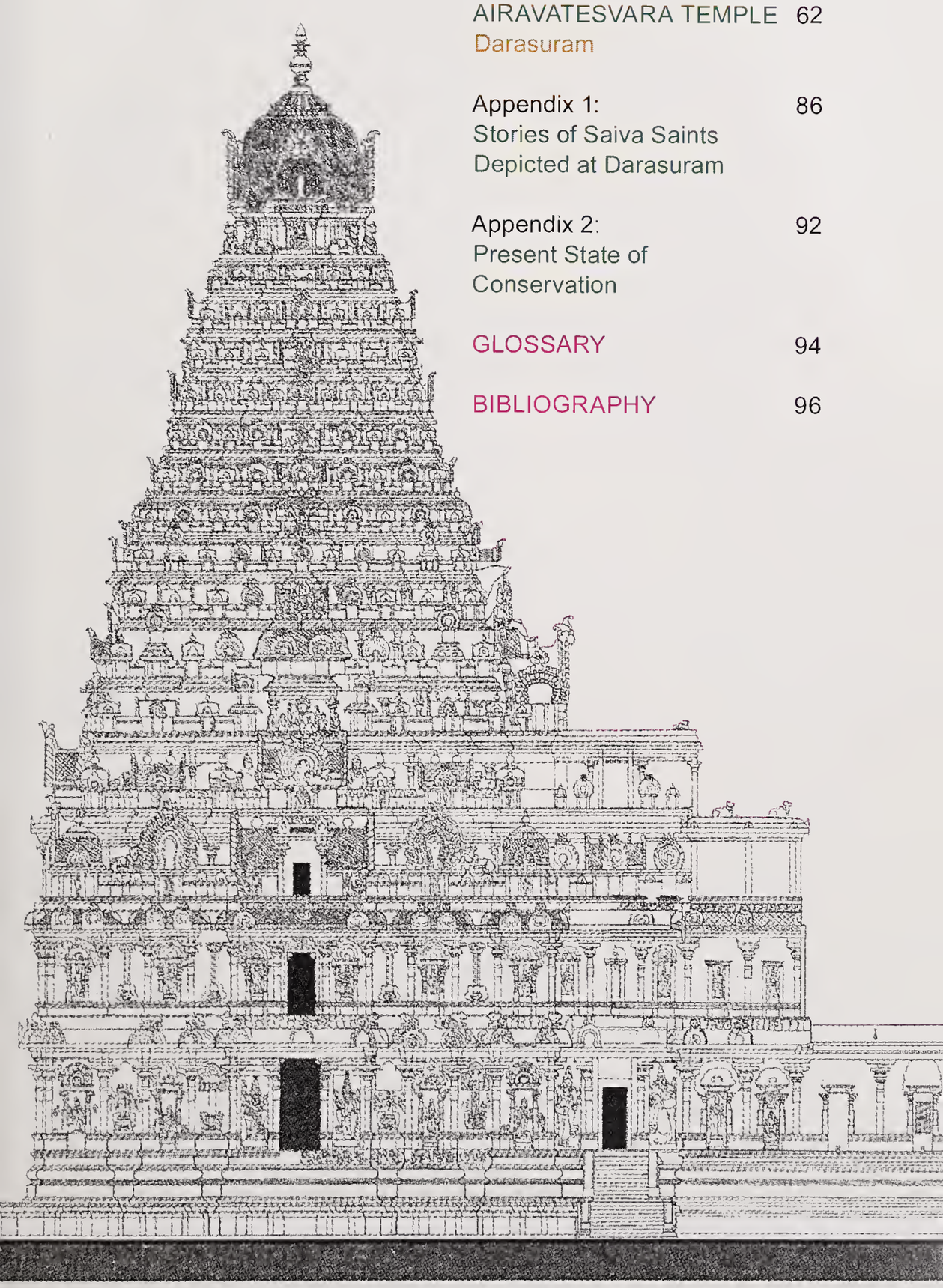

FOREWORD

THE GREAT CHOLA TEMPLES

Thanjavur earned prominence under the Cholas who erected a large number of temples, of which the Brihadisvara (Dakshinameru) at Thajavur stands foremost for its grandeur. This colossal temple, dedicated to Siva, is a befitting symbol of the magnificent achievements and greatness of the emperor who established the temple and named it after himself, Rajarajesvaram-udayar. His personality is reflected in a series of epigraphs inscribed through the plinth which record the gift of a gold-covered finial by the king on the two hundred and seventy-fifth day of his twenty-fifth regnal year, to be placed on the top of the temple *vimana*. The second Brihadisvara temple at Gangaikondacholapuram bespeaks the imperial dignity of the capital established by his son Rajendra. He established it after his victorious march to eastern India up to the river Ganga. It has massive monolithic statues to guard the entrances. The Airavatesvara temple complex at Darasuram, built by Rajaraja II, is equally grand and impressive. These three Chola temples collectively represent outstanding creative achievements, marked by pure Dravida style of architecture, sculpture and painting.

C. Babu Rajeev
Director General
Archaeological Survey of India

GENERAL INFORMATION

Thanjavur, the headquarters of the district of that name, lies about 322 km to the south-west of Chennai and is accessible directly by rail or road, via Kumbakonam, from Chennai. Thanjavur stands on the southern bank of the Vadavaru river, at the south-western extremity of the Cauvery delta. Its main temple, Brihadisvara, is located about 1.5 km from the Thanjavur railway station, within the Sivaganga Little Fort; and surrounded by a moat on its west, north and east, the Grand Anaicut Canal on its south and by Hospital Road on a short stretch on its north-east. The temple complex is approached from its east by Vallam Road. The total area of the Sivaganga Little Fort is 18.075 hectares, of which the temple covers 2.85 hectares.

Accommodation ranging from economy to luxury is available at Thanjavur, provided by both the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) and by various private agencies. There is also a Circuit House, maintained by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Gangaikondacholapuram is located in Udyarpalayam taluk of Perumbalur district and situated on the northern edge of the Cauvery delta beyond the Kollidam river, about 260 km from Chennai, 85 km from Thanjavur, 70 km from Perumbalur and 36 km from Kumbakonam. A visitor from Chennai may travel by rail or road to Kumbakonam, from where there are regular bus services to Gangaikondacholapuram. Kumbakonam has private lodging facilities of a moderate kind. The temple here is also called Brihadisvara, and it is bounded on the north by Jayamkondam-Chidambaram Road, on the east by Mettupalayam Road, off which the site is entered, and on the south and west by agricultural fields. The rectangle of its enclosing walls measures about 185 m east-west and 110 m north-south.

Darasuram is located on the outskirts of Kumbakonam, just 5 km from the town, and 40 km from Thanjavur. Darasuram's main temple is called Airavatesvara, with a separate though adjoining Deivanayaki Amman shrine. Both are bounded on the east by Tirukulam Kizhkarai Street, off which the site is entered, on the north by Old Agraharam Street, the west by Railway Station Road and the south by residential properties. The Amman shrine is entered from its east by Amman Sannadhi Street. Both the sites and the buffer zone around them cover an area of 5.5 hectares.

All three monuments are inscribed in the World Heritage List by UNESCO as "The Great Living Chola Temples".

These monuments are open to the public daily, from sunrise to sunset. Photography of the temples' exteriors using still cameras without stands, and with synchronized flash is permitted. All other forms of photography/videography require permission from:

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HISTORY

The Cholas of Thanjavur (ninth to thirteenth centuries) were great conquerors, not only paramount in south India but, for some time, extending their sway as far as the river Ganga in the north, and exerting influence over Sri Lanka, a part of Burma, the Malayan peninsula and some islands in south-east Asia. They were also mighty builders who erected a large number of temples across their empire. Inheritors of the Pallava tradition, these edifices reflect the power and genius of their authors, and some of the monuments constitute the finest specimens of south Indian architecture.

The early Cholas are referred to in the literature of the Sangam Age, and rulers from that time, such as the emperor Karikala, are lost in legendary grandeur. It was several centuries later, *circa* 850, that Vijayalaya (850-71), the first of the imperial line of Cholas, established a small kingdom around Thanjavur, which developed into a gigantic empire under his successors. Indeed, the Chola empire from the time of Vijayalaya witnessed a very significant period of religious and literary revival in south India.

Under Vijayalaya's son and grandson, Aditya and Parantaka respectively, there was a great temple-building activity. Parantaka (907-54) ruled for forty-eight years. Bearing such heroic titles as *virasolan* and *samara-kesari,* he extended his dominions by conquests. Shortly after his accession, Parantaka defeated the combined forces of the Pandyas, who ruled further south at Madurai, and of Sri Lanka, and thus acquired the title *Maduraiyum-Ilamum-konda,* i.e., one who captured Madurai and Sri Lanka. He was a great devotee of Siva, and covered the Chidambaram temple with gold. He must also have been a great scholar and patron of literature, as suggested by his title *panditavatsala.*

Entry to the Brihadisvara temple complex, Thanjavur

Parantaka's sons inherited his qualities, but unfortunately both died early. The eldest, Rajaditya (947-49), came close to defeating the Rashtrakuta king, Krishna III – but died during the battle while seated on his elephant, at the very moment of victory. Rajaditya's younger brother, Gandaraditya (949-57), also died young, leaving his queen with a little child in her arms. However, the queen was pious and remarkable for her generosity in building and endowing temples.

Thus followed a weak period in Chola history. The Rashtrakuta ruler, Krishna III, asserted his power in Tondai-mandalam. Since Gandaraditya's son was a child, Arinjaya (956-57), Gandaraditya's younger brother ascended to the throne, and fought a battle to try and regain the lost territory. But he too lost his life on the battlefield, and was succeeded by his son, Sundara-Chola.

Sundara-Chola (956-73) was a great warrior and a just ruler. Like his grandfather, Parantaka, he was also a great patron of literature. Sundara-Chola's last days were clouded by the tragic assassination of Aditya, his valiant eldest son. Aditya's younger brother, Rajaraja, was then a youth but already greatly accomplished and powerful. However, Rajaraja's nobility was such that he refused to ascend to the Chola throne, even though he was greatly desired by the people. The reason was that Rajaraja's uncle, Uttama-Chola – Gandaraditya's infant son, now quite grown up – longed for the throne. In 985, however, Rajaraja finally succeeded.

Known as Rajakesari Arumolivarman, Rajaraja I (985-1014) was probably the greatest Chola emperor, and the thirty years of his rule constitute the formative period of Chola imperialism. His military triumphs, organization of the empire, patronage of art and literature, and religious tolerance are only partially matched by future Chola emperors, among them his own son Rajendra, who was a great military genius.

Ten-armed Siva dancing in the chatura *pose in the* pradakshina *of the Brihadisvara temple* garbhagriha, *Thanjavur*

At the time of Rajaraja's ascension, the Chola kingdom had just recovered from the onslaught of the Rashtrakutas. Thus, Rajaraja inaugurated his reign with military campaigns to strengthen the kingdom. He subdued the Keralas, Pandyas and Simhalas, and prevailed over the western hilly tracts of Mysore and Gangavadi. He also triumphed over the Chalukya king, Satyasraya, and used the great treasures gained from this victory to enrich the magnificent temple known as Brihadisvara (or Rajarajesvara) he had built at Thanjavur.

Being both a valorous and sagacious conqueror, Rajaraja gave his daughter, Kundavai, in marriage to Vimaladitya, younger brother of Saktivarman, the Eastern Chalukya king under Rajaraja's protection.

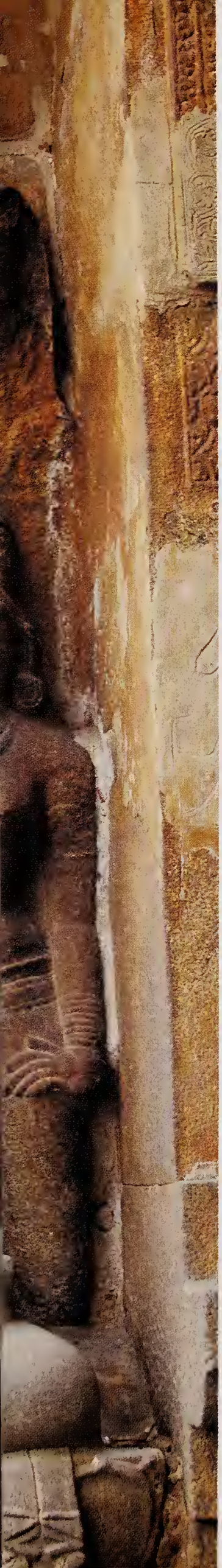
A force to reckon with on both land and sea, Rajaraja used his mighty navy to conquer the Maldives, as well as a number of other islands; and crippled the Cheras, known for their naval strength. He also sent his son Rajendra to Kalinga and established a pillar of victory on Mahendra hill.

It was Rajaraja who first recorded all the transactions relating to the maintenance of temples in a detailed and graphic manner including official accounts of the leading events of his reign, in set form. The practice was maintained by his successors, thereby providing a formal record of the transactions, internal chronology and general history of each reign.

Rajaraja was followed by his equally brilliant son Rajendra I (1012-44). On the foundations established by his father, Rajendra raised the Chola empire to the position of being the most extensive and respected Hindu state of his time, and was undoubtedly the most influential ruler of his line. He asserted his power in Sri Lanka, the Chera and the Pandya countries and Vanavasi and vanquished the Chalukya Jayasimha. He then turned his gaze northwards, in his desire to bring the waters of the sacred Ganga to his kingdom, by the might of his arm. In less than two years, Rajendra conquered the Eastern Chalukya territory, Kalinga and Dakshina-Kosala, as well as the Pala king Mahipala of east India.

Above: Shanka Nidhi *or water spout on the north side of the* vimana
Top right: Lion and soldier motifs on the north side of the vimana, *Brihadisvara temple, Thanjavur*

Saivism established itself as the dominant Chola religion by the ninth century, invoked by the early Chola rulers after Parantaka I, and consolidated by Rajaraja I and Rajendra I. This period saw the culmination of *dravida* architecture and high attainment in sculpture, painting and bronze casting; and these mediums of expression were integrated in the three royal and sacred devotional centres of Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram and Darasuram. While their construction spans a period of over one hundred and fifty years, many earlier centuries of highly sophisticated knowledge systems are embodied in their forms.



To celebrate these triumphs, Rajendra created the *jalamaya-stambha*, 'a liquid pillar of victory' in his new capital at Gangaikondacholapuram, or 'the city of the Chola, the bringer of the Ganga'. Rajendra demanded only one tribute from his vassal-kings – that they should bring pots of water from the Ganga; and this water was poured into the great tank. The emperor assumed the title of *Gangaikondachola*, 'the Chola king who brought the Ganga'. As thanksgiving, he erected a large temple in honour of Siva, also known as Brihadisvara, at his capital.

Rajendra then utilized the powerful Chola navy to attack and subdue the Sailendra king Sangramavijayottungavarman of Srivijaya (Sumatra-Java). His inscriptions include mention of a number of places included in the empire of Srivijaya, which are understood to be located mainly in Malaya. His further conquests of Burma, the islands in the Eastern Archipelago, Sri Lanka, Lakshadweep and Maldives clearly demonstrate his unparalleled naval strength. In other fields, Rajendra's tremendous scholarship and literary attainments earned him the title *pandita-Chola*. The marriage of his daughter Ammangadevi to his nephew, the Eastern Chalukya king Rajaraja, was a stroke of diplomatic genius; and the child born of this marriage was the great Rajendra-Chola Kulottunga.

Left: Sarasvati on the west of the maha-mandapa, *Thanjavur*
Above: Eighteen-armed Durga in Brihadisvara temple complex, Gangaikondacholapuram

Kulottunga (1070-1120) succeeded his maternal uncles Rajadhiraja and Virarajendra in 1070 and ruled over an extensive empire, combining the Chola and Chalukya dominions. He was dominant on both land and sea. His power was felt even in distant Kalinga. He was succeeded by Vikrama-Chola (1118-35).

Vikrama-Chola's son, Kulottunga II (1133-50), made elaborate renovations to the temple at Chidambaram. This building activity was sustained in the reign of his son, Rajaraja II (1150-73), whose title *Raja-gambhira* is recorded in the *mandapa* of the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram. It is at Darasuram too that numerous stories of Saiva saints reveal the rulers' growing zeal for Saivism.

Rajaraja II's nephew, Rajadhiraja (1166-1180), was succeeded by Kulottunga III (1178-1218), the last great Chola emperor. By sheer strength of will and personality, Kulottunga III checked the disruption that had begun eating into the vitals of the empire. He was also a great builder, and his reign is marked by several additions to the glorious Chola architecture. His influence is evident not only in the Kampaharesvara temple at Tribhuvanam, the most important monument of his time, but also at Kanchi, Madurai, Chidambaram, Tiruvarur, Tiruvidaimarudur and Darasuram.

Inside view of the northern cloister mandapa *of Brihadisvara temple complex, Thanjavur*

ARCHITECTURE

To understand the architecture of the Chola temples, it is essential to know something of the kind of architecture that both preceded and followed the Chola period. The earliest temples in south India were built by the Pallavas between the seventh and ninth centuries, and these have certain features that differentiate them from the building styles. As G. Jouveau-Dubreuil (in *Archêologie du sud de l'Inde*, Pt. i (Paris, 1914, pp. 71-145) has illustrated very clearly, the niches, pavilions, pillars and pilaster-corbels and horseshoe-shaped windows (*kudu*), among others, show distinctive developments, which help to date different monuments. The figures on this page and on page 21 are after Jouveau-Dubreuil.

A typical niche (fig. 1) in earlier Pallava rock-cut monuments, such as at Mahabalipuram and the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram, is rather wide, while the *makara-torana* decoration on the niche-top is flat, with the floriated tail of the *makara* flowing over the sides. Chola niches, however, as well as later Pallava ones, are more narrow, and the decoration on the niche-top is more round. Similarly, the simulated railings for pavilions on monuments at Mahabalipuram are quite different from their Chola counterparts; while the *kudu* (fig. 2) has a shovel-headed finial at Mahabalipuram but develops a lion-head in Chola monuments – a style that was to continue thereafter.

fig. 1 Pallava niche

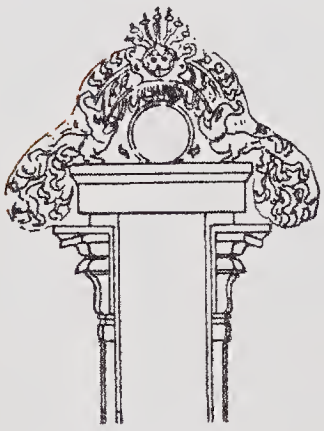


fig. 1 Chola niche

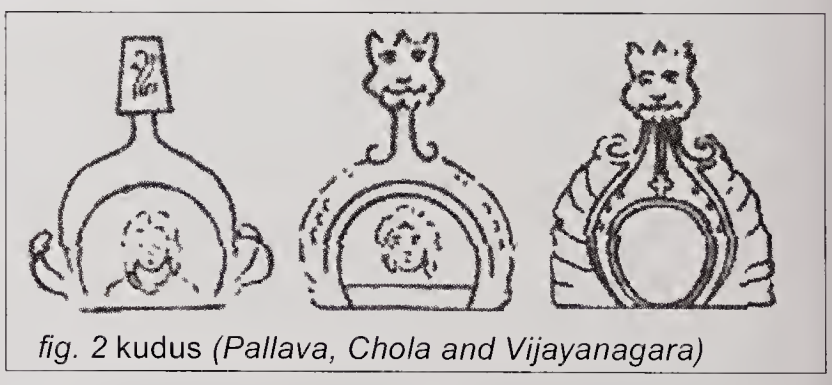
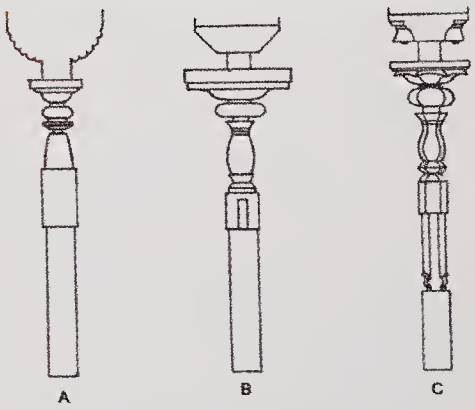


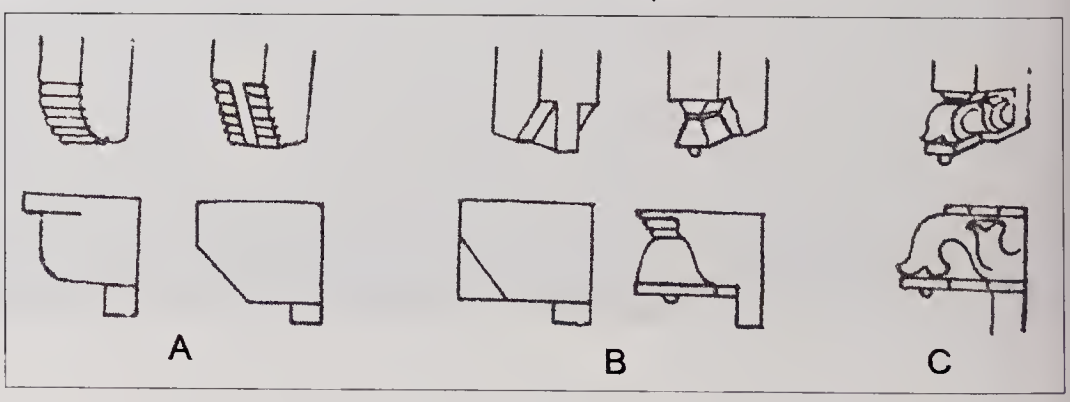
fig. 2 kudus *(Pallava, Chola and Vijayanagara)*

fig. 3 Pillars (A-Pallava, B-Chola and C-Vijayanagara)



Pillar capitals (figs. 3 and 4) and pilasters in Chola monuments are rectangular, with the sides carved in slants of 45° and a projecting central portion. It is evident that minus this projecting, central block Chola corbels are not essentially different from early Pallava corbels, in which too the same angle occurs, along with rounded corbels. Later Vijayanagara lotus-corbels developed from this style.

fig.4 Pillar-capitals (A-Pallava, B-Chola and C-Vijayanagara)

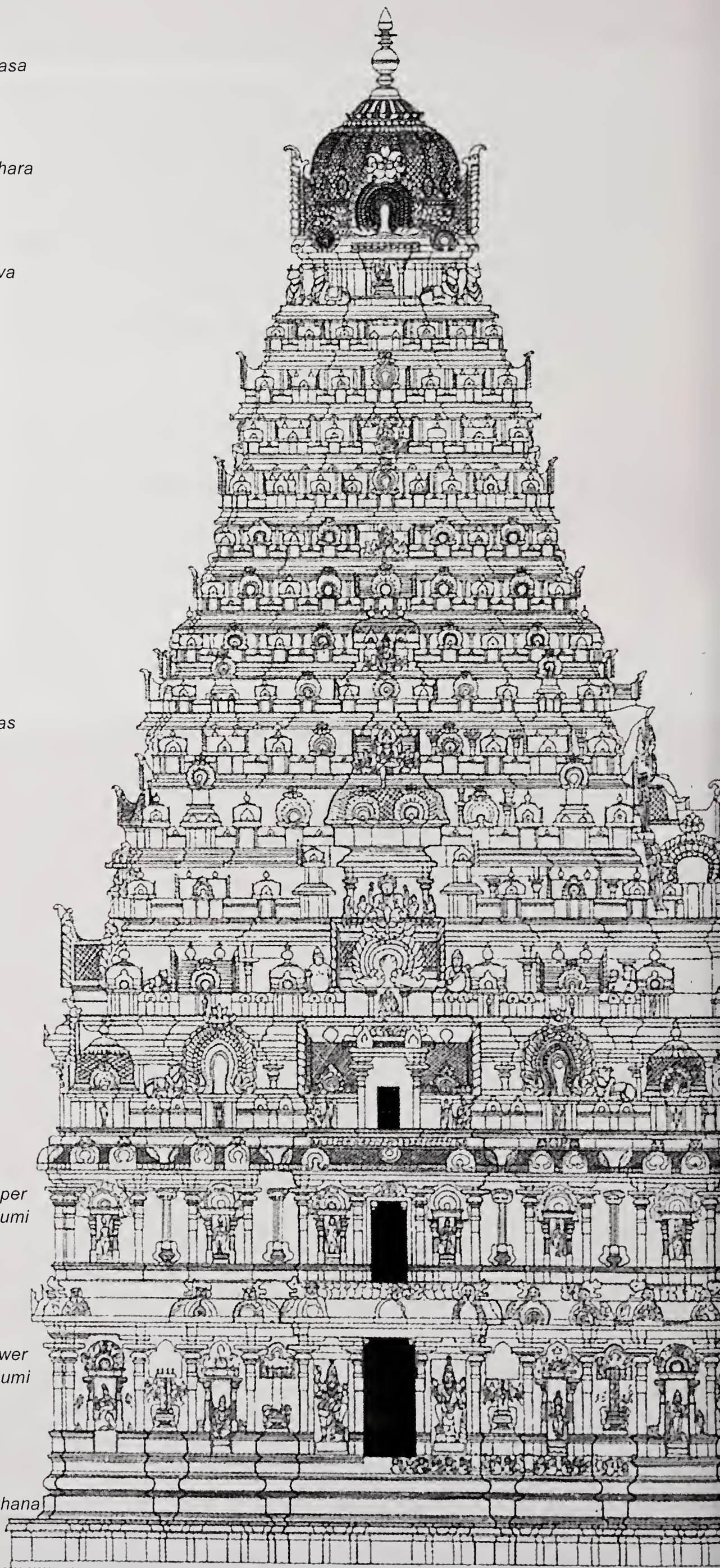


The central shrine in Pallava structural temples, like the Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram, is prominent while the *gopura* is somewhat squat. In early Chola temples, the shrine is gradually magnified until, by the time of Rajaraja and his successors, it becomes colossal – as evident in the temples of Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram, Darasuram and Tribhuvanam. The early Chola *gopuras*, though larger than those of the Pallavas, remain relatively short, and it is only in the late Chola period that gigantic *gopuras* develop, and even dwarf the central shrine.

Earlier Pallava *dvarapalas* (door-keepers) appear very natural, and usually have a single pair of arms. These are replaced in Chola structures with *dvarapalas* of fierce mien, with four arms. The sculptures at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram are typical examples: they carry a *trisula* (trident) on their crowns, have tusks protruding from their mouths and evoke terror with their knit eye-brows, rolling eyes and hands in the *tarjani* (threatening) and *vismaya* (wonder) attitudes.

Stone sculpture was generally subsidiary to architecture, and the Chola sculptor demonstrated restraint, through plain spaces on walls, uncrowded with ornamentation. Chola sculpture falls into three main categories: portraits, icons and decorative. The most important icons of Chola sculpture are Saiva figures, though there are some fine Vaishnava and Jaina images too. Other sculptures include massive *dvarapalas*, floral and vegetal patterns, friezes of animals, birds, dancing figures with musicians and legendary or *Puranic* stories.

- *Kalasa*
- *Sikhara*
- *Griva*
- *Talas*
- *Upper Bhumi*
- *Lower Bhumi*
- *Adhishthana*



Most Chola bronzes were made by the *cire perdu* method, and Nataraja in his various forms was their dominant theme, though they also represented the lives of Saiva saints. The bronzes attained renown for their refined forms, details, material and the process of casting images both gigantic and small.

The large Chola temples are equipped with long flights of steps leading from the sides to the platform, which precedes the sanctum's entrance. Their balustrades are massive, curled up at the end and decorated on the exterior. Alternating *koshtha-panjaras* and *kumbha panjaras* (fig. 5) form regular features of the decoration, while the niches are flanked by pilasters crowned with curved roof-mouldings adorned by two *kudus* with lion-head crowns The base of the series of niches has *yali* decorations and *makara*-heads with battling warriors coming out of their mouths decorate the corners and intervals.

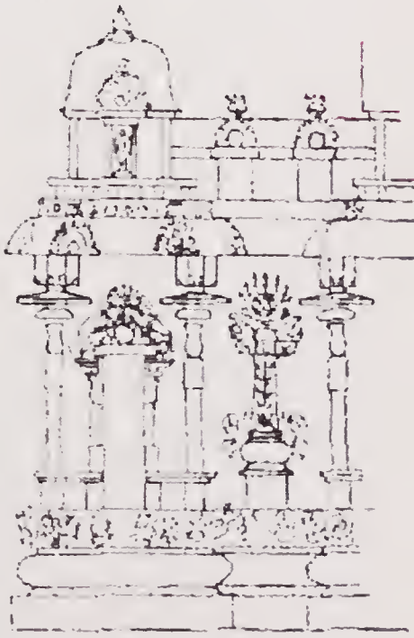
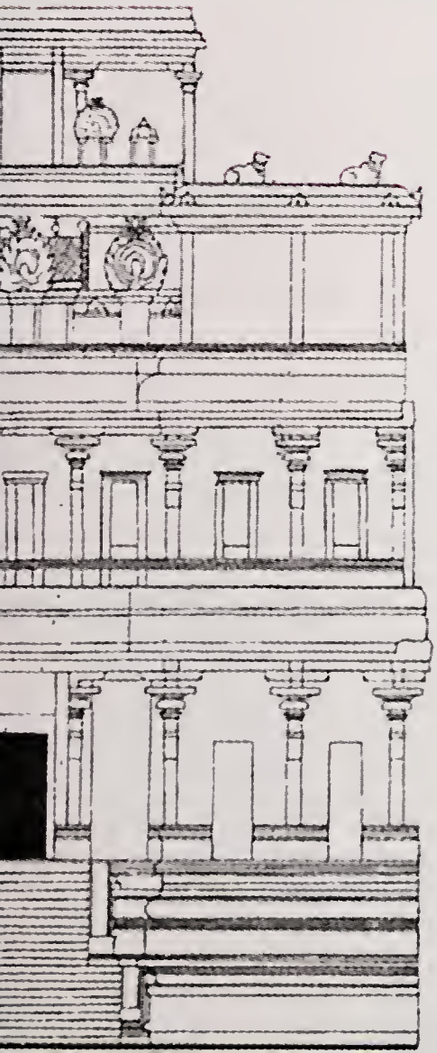
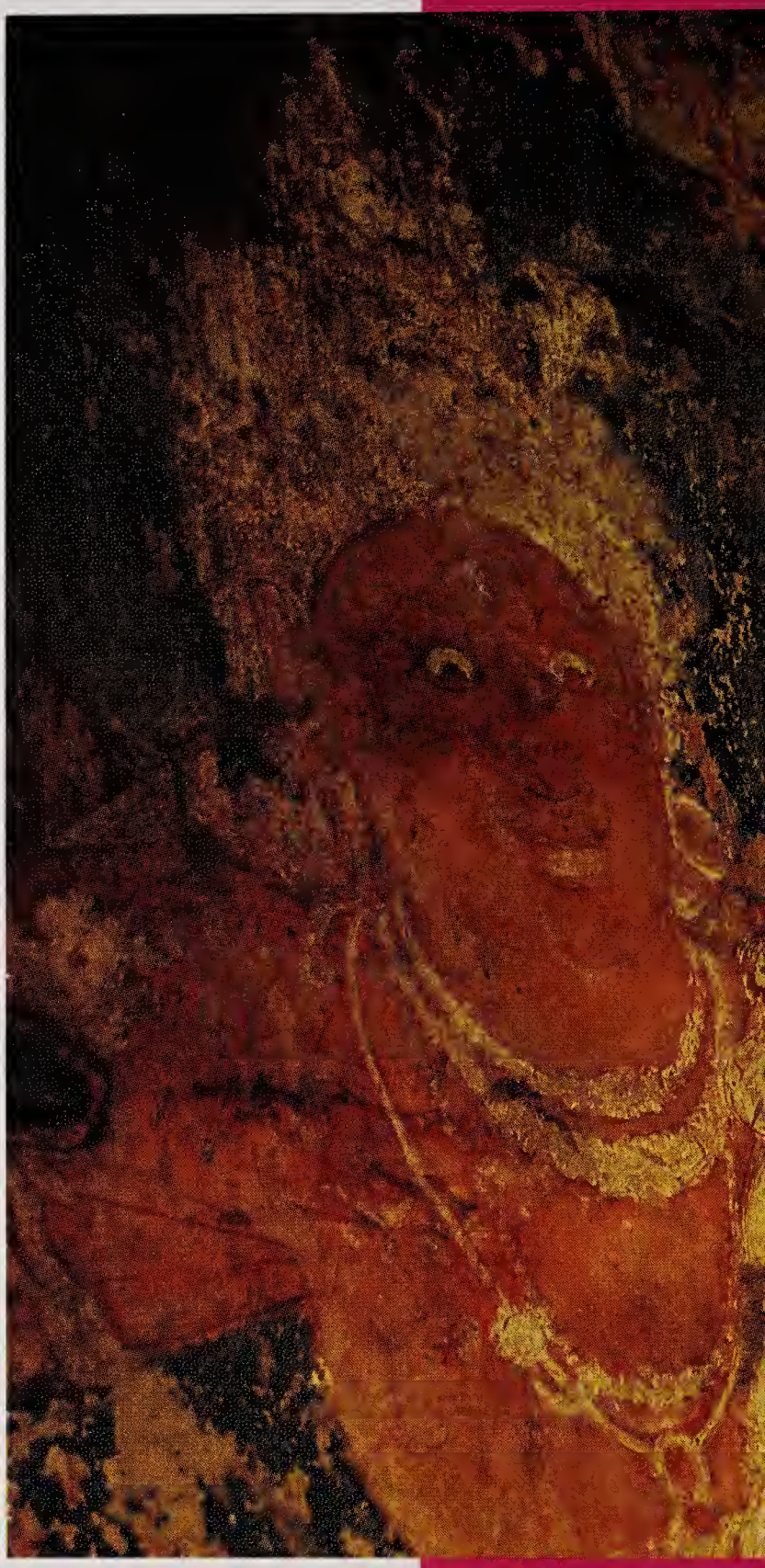


fig. 5 koshtha-panjara *(left portion) and* kumbha-panjara *(right portion)*



Left: Vimana *elevation; southern side, Brihadisvara temple, Thanjavur*



The temple pavilions usually consist of two *panjaras* flanking a *sala* (wagon-roof pavilion) – the former with a single finial and the latter with three. The *kumbha-panjara* went through many stages of development: those in early Chola temples are fairly simple, but these become far more decorative and elaborate in later monuments.

Separate *mandapas* form a regular feature of late Chola and Vijayanagara temples, with many pillars adorning them, but are less prominent in early Chola structures, though in these too the temple's front is a long *mandapa*, used for different kinds of *bhoga*-worship. Early Chola temples also feature large courtyards with small shrines set at the cardinal and inter-cardinal points, against the enclosure-wall, for enshrining *dikpalas* (guardians of the directions).

The following pages describe three of the most important Chola temples: the two Brihadisvara temples, built by Rajaraja I (985-1014) and Rajendra I (1012-44) at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram respectively, and the Airavatesvara temple, built by Rajaraja II (1150-73) at Darasuram.

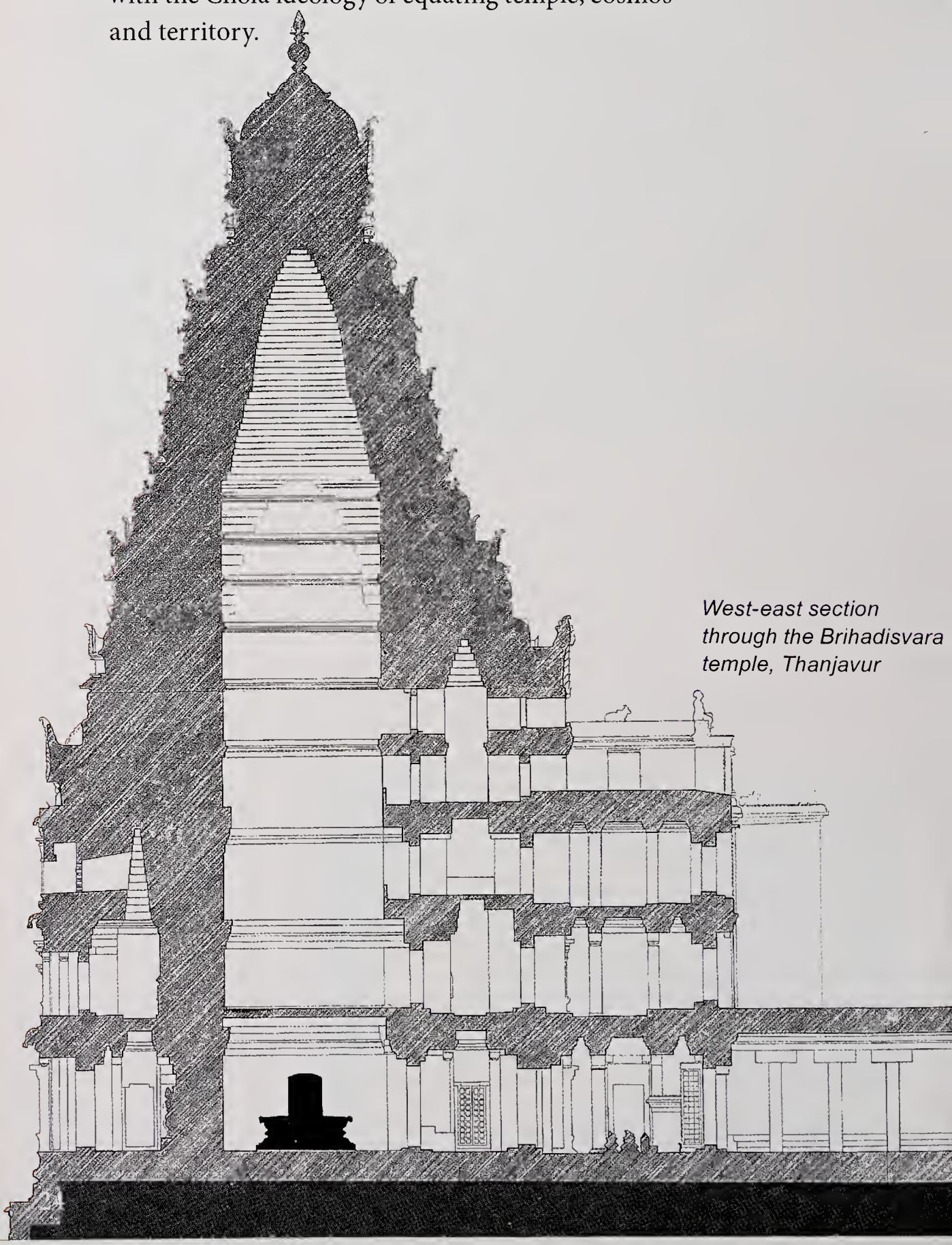
Above: Chola painting, Tripurantaka Siva in the pradakshina
Below: Rajaraja with his three wives

Chola painting was a continuation of Pallava and Pandya art. The most remarkable Chola paintings are from the time of Rajaraja I, in the Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur. The theme of Chola paintings was religious, drawing mainly from the lives of the Nayanmars, later compiled into the *Periyapuranam*. The Thanjavur paintings are highly refined and finely executed, using mainly natural earth colours such as yellow, brown, red, shades of green and blue, white and black.

BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE

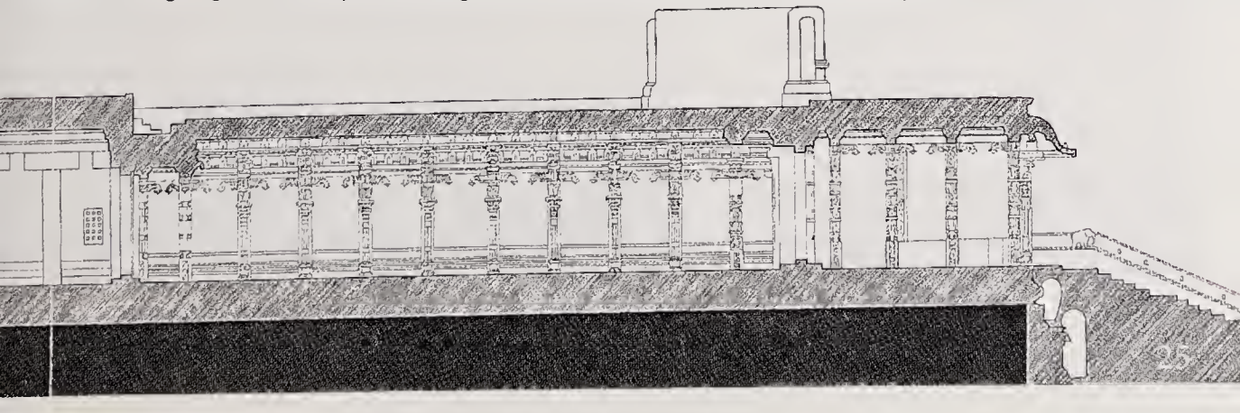
THANJAVUR

Thanjavur attained prominence under the Cholas in the ninth century when Vijayalaya, the dynasty's first great ruler, established his capital here. The Brihadisvara temple here symbolizes the greatness of the Chola empire, and reflects the splendour of its author, emperor Rajaraja I. This ambitious architectural undertaking began in 1003 and was designed to represent cosmic structures, in keeping with the Chola ideology of equating temple, cosmos and territory.



West-east section through the Brihadisvara temple, Thanjavur

*Top: View of the entrance to the temple complex with the Nandi-*mandapa *in the foreground*
Above: Long flights of steps leading from the south side to the mandapa



The Brihadisvara temple is a monument dedicated to Siva, represented by a *linga* that Rajaraja established here and named Rajarajesvaram-udayar, after himself. The inscriptions incised in elegant letters along the plinth of the temple's gigantic edifice extol the personality of this great emperor. The inscriptions also tell how the emperor, on the two hundred and seventy-fifth day of the twenty-fifth year of his reign (1010), presented a gold-covered finial to be placed on top of the temple's *vimana*.

In all, the temple has sixty-four inscriptions of Rajaraja, twenty-nine of Rajendra I, one each of Rajendradeva, Kulottunga I and Vikrama Chola, three of a probable Pandyan king, two of Vijayanagara rulers, one each of Achyutappa Nayaka and Mallappa Nayaka, as well as ten Marathi inscriptions attributed to Sarafoji II – one of which states that the Maharaja purified and reconsecrated the temple in 1801-02, repaired several shrines, built new *mandapas* and renovated the *prakara*-walls, temple kitchen and courtyard floor.

As the Cholas' most ambitious architectural enterprise, the Brihadisvara temple is a fitting symbol of Rajaraja's magnificent achievements. The emperor made numerous generous endowments to the temple, and he was joined in his munificence by other members of the royal family and high officials and noblemen of the court. Large images in bronze and gold were presented to the temple, and their ornaments, described in detail in the inscriptions, provide a vivid glimpse into the art and skill of jewellers of the time.

Even though most of the images and all the jewels have now disappeared, some exquisite bronzes, representing Nataraja, Tripurantaka, Devi and Ganesa, do remain and give an idea of what great treasures the temple once housed. True to his title *Sivapadasekhara*, Rajaraja spared no cost in embellishing this great monument. His sister, Kundavai, and others from his family associated themselves in his endeavour. Records of their endowments, together with the documentation of

Linga *with a Nayaka painting of Sarasvati on the inside wall of the northern cloister* mandapa

even small weights and measures, the custom and method of receiving, maintaining and paying donations, as well as accounts of the interest on such donation, given for the regular conduct of worship, the burning of lamps and other meticulous details provide valuable insights into the economic conditions of the time.

Top: Nataraja *on the southern wall of the* vimana
Above: Carved images of Vishnu and Ganesa *on the southern wall of the* vimana

Above left: Siva on the northern face of the vimana
Above: Sarasvati near the southern entrance
Left: Massive dvarapala *guarding the entrance to Brihadisvara temple complex, Thanjavur*
Right: Chola painting on the west wall of the pradakshina *depicting the guards of Rajaraja*
Top right: Detail from Chola painting on the southern wall of the pradakshina

Fine arts, made in the service of the temple, were encouraged; and the sculptures, the paintings in the sanctum's dark passages, and even the inscriptions in elegant Chola Grantha and Tamil letters give some idea of the refined art patronized by Rajaraja. Proficiency in dance and music was greatly prized and these arts, too, were employed to serve the temple: the evening ritual was also a form of entertainment, and the townspeople would gather in the *mandapa* to witness and enjoy ceremonies such as the waving of lights and the chanting of Vedic and Devaram hymns.

In this manner, the temple acquired a vast staff, including cooks, gardeners, flower-gatherers, garland-makers, musicians, drummers, dancers and dance-masters, wood-carvers, sculptors, painters, choir-groups for singing hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, accountants, watchmen and a host of other officials and servants. The inscriptions record that all these 'employees' were given adequate grants of land.

Just from the one fact that Rajaraja constructed two long streets (*talichcheri*), for the accommodation of four hundred dancing women attached to the temple, we can well imagine the lavish scale on which he endowed the temple and its management. The annual income from the land set aside for the temple is estimated as one hundred and sixteen thousand *kalams* of paddy. Besides this, the emperor is known to have presented gold weighing 489 lbs. troy and silverware weighing 600 lbs. troy, as well as jewels, cash and many other gifts, which form a staggering account of munificence.

The cost of the temple's construction was no less extravagant. It is constructed of large granite blocks. However, since granite is not available in this area, it was brought from a distance – itself a colossal task. The plinth of the central shrine measures 45.72 square m, the shrine proper 30.48 square m and the *vimana*, the tallest ever built, is 60.96 m high, with 13 receding tiers.

Far left: Ardha-narisvara
Left: Koshtha *image of* dvarapala *in the Subrahmanya shrine*

The massive plinth is entirely covered with inscriptions, and has two rows of niches on three of its sides, with images of deities such as Siva, Vishnu and Durga.

The lower niches on the southern wall contain: Ganesa, Vishnu with Sri-devi and Bhu-devi, Lakshmi, a pair of *dvarapalas*, Vishnuanugraha-murti, Bhikshatana, Virabhadra, another pair of *dvarapalas,* Dakshina-murti, Kalantaka and Natesa.

The lower niches on the west wall depict: Hari-Hara, Ardhanarisvara, a pair of *dvarapalas* and two Chandrasekharas, one with and the other without a halo.

Left: Kalantaka, southern wall of the vimana
Below: Inscriptions in elegant Chola Grantha and Tamil letters on the northern side of the vimana
Below left: Bhikshatana, on the southern side of the vimana

On the north wall, the lower niches contain: Ardhanarisvara, Gangadhara, a pair of *dvarapalas*, Virabhadra (without the usual moustache, but with a sword and shield), Alingana-Chandrasekhara, Siva holding a *sula* (spear), a second pair of *dvarapalas*, Sarasvati, Mahisha-mardini and Bhairava.

Of these, the first and last pair of *dvarapalas* and the first and last four niches appear on the temple's front porch, while the rest are on the *vimana's* main walls. The upper niches on all walls contain Tripurantakas, repeated in each niche, while the small circular spaces of the niche-tops are used for carvings of deities like Ganesa, Vrishavahana, Bhikshatana, Narasimha, Varaha, and more.

At the eastern entrance to the temple, there is a flight of steps leading to a pillared *mandapa*. This is a later addition – originally the *dvarapalas* on either side and the princely warriors in the niches faced the visitor. There are two other flights of steps on the northern and southern sides, as also between the front porch and the main shrine on either side.

The Nandis on the *vimana*, seated sideways but with their heads turned to the front, are reminiscent of their counterparts at Mahabalipuram.

Most fascinating is the stone that constitutes the huge *sikhara*. It is said to weigh 81.284 tonnes, and is popularly believed to have been dragged up to its present height along an inclined plane that had its base at a place called Sarapallam ('elevation from depression'), located 6.44 km away.

The temple's vast inner courtyard measures about 152.40 x 76.20 m and is surrounded by a cloister. At the entrance there are two *gopuras*, widely separated from each other. Of these the first is larger but the second, guarded by two monolithic *dvarapalas*, is better decorated. The carvings on the latter illustrate Saivite stories like the marriage of Siva and Parvati, Siva protecting Markandeya, and Arjuna winning the *pasupata* weapon.

Left: Uma-Mahesvara, northern side of the vimana
Above: Karuvur Devar in his shrine in the Brihadisvara temple complex

Frontal view of the massive Nandi

Of particular interest are images of Saiva Nayanmar saints, installed here in the eleventh century. They provide proof of the importance of the saints of the time, and of the fact that their hymns had gained the name of *Padigam*, collected in the *Devaram* at the time of Rajaraja.

Beyond the *gopuras,* in the court facing the central shrine and under the canopy of a *mandapa* added in recent times, is a huge monolithic Nandi. Indeed this is a fitting vehicle for the colossal *linga* installed in the central shrine, which is more than 3.66 m high. The inscriptions record that this *linga* was called *adavallan*, 'one who can dance well', and *dakshina-meru-vitankan* – both names associated with the Chidambaram deity, whom the Cholas greatly revered, and thus adopted by them for this *linga*. It is also known after Rajaraja as Raja-rajesvaramudayar.

The dark passage surrounding the temple's sanctum contains important specimens of sculptural art. Of particular note are three colossal sculptures located in the south, west and north, which represent Siva holding a spear, a fierce, seated Siva carrying a sword and trident, and ten-armed Siva dancing in the *chatura* pose while Vishnu plays the drum and Devi sits in *padmasana* holding a lotus-bud and a rosary.

The walls and ceiling of this passage were originally covered with exquisite paintings, most of them now hidden behind paintings executed during the Nayaka period in the seventeenth century. Fragments of the fine, highly stylized paintings in subtle earth colours are still discernable in portions, contrasting sharply with the black-outlined, bright and comparatively crude ones of the later period. The original paintings have almost been exposed.

Above left: Ganesa in the lower niches on the southern wall
Left: Frieze depicting Buddha along the flight of steps to the southern entrance of the temple

The western wall is occupied by a huge panel which shows Siva as Dakshina-murti, seated on tiger-skin in a *yogic* pose, approximating the *maharaja-lila*, with a *paryanka-bandha* or *yoga-patta* across his waist and right knee, watching the dance of two *apsaras* (celestial nymphs) with interest, while Vishnu, dwarf *ganas* and other celestial musicians play on drums and other instruments, a few princely figures watch the scene and two saints, Sundara and Cheraman, hurry to the spot on elephant and horse-back. A little further away, and above, is depicted a temple (architecturally of the early Chola style) with Nataraja enshrined in it, and princely devotees seated outside. Further down is painted the story of how Siva came down in the form of an old man, carrying a document that established his right to carry away Sundara on his marriage-day, to his abode at Tiruvennainallur. Further below is a lively scene of women cooking and food being served during the marriage-festivity.

Beyond this, on the other side of the wall, is a large figure of Nataraja dancing in the golden hall at Chidambaram, with priests and other devotees on one side and a stately prince, obviously Rajaraja, accompanied by three of his queens, as well as followers including *kanchukis* and other attendants carrying rods of office.

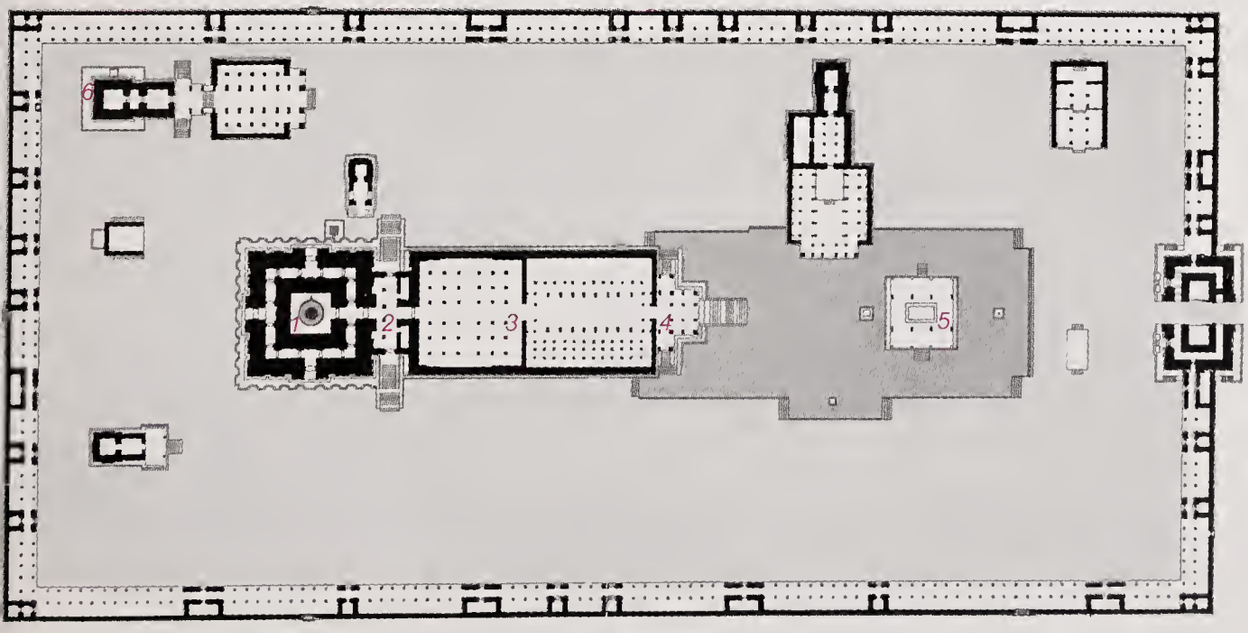
On the opposite wall are some charming miniatures of graceful women. A little further up is Rajaraja with his *guru*, Karuvur Devar.

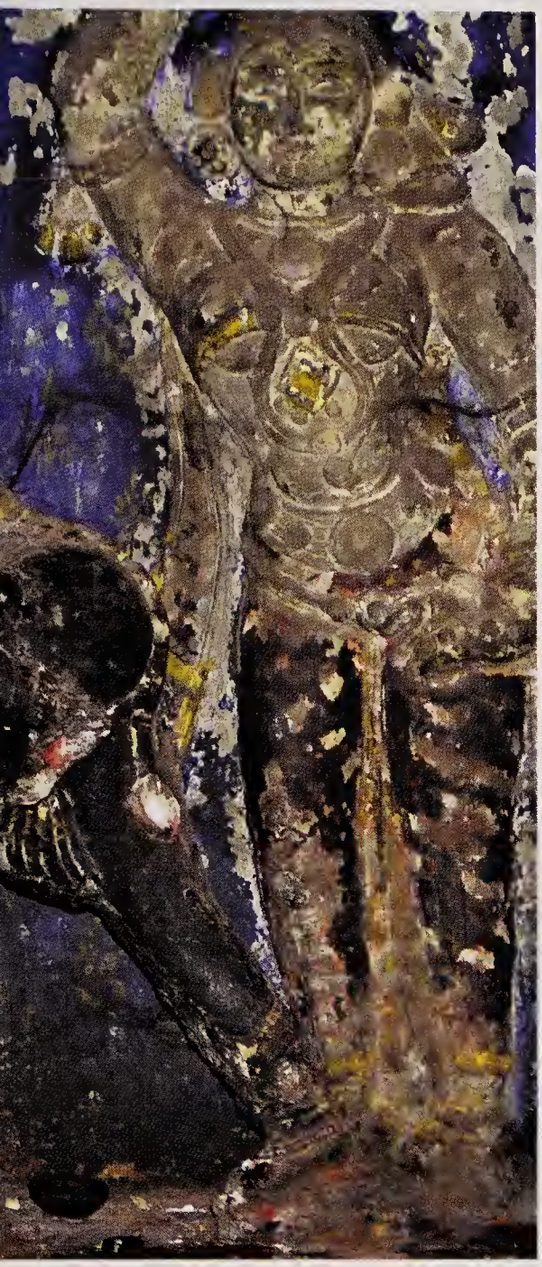
Beyond this, on the wall opposite the northern one and facing the passage, are five heads peeping out of a partially-exposed painting.

The entire northern wall is covered by a gigantic figure of Tripurantaka Siva on a chariot driven by Brahma. Tripurantaka, accompanied by Karttikeya on his peacock, Ganesa on his mouse and Kali on her lion, and Nandi in front of the chariot, is in the *alidha* pose of a warrior with eight arms, each bearing a weapon and in the act of using a mighty bow to overpower a host of aggressive and fearless demons with their womenfolk clinging to them. This painting is the greatest masterpiece of the Chola artist, distinguished for its power, grandeur, rhythm and composition and unparalleled by any contemporary painting or sculpture.

Above right: Chola painting of Rajaraja with his guru Karuvur Devar in the pradakshina-patha
Right: Plan of the Brihadisvara temple complex

1. *Garbhagriha* 2. *Ardha-mandapa* 3. *Maha-mandapa*
4. *Mukha-mandapa* 5. Nandi *mandapa* 6. *Subrahmanya shrine*





This representation of Siva shows the earlier Pallava tradition. In the Chola period, Tripurantaka is usually shown in the *abhanga*, or in the *tribhanga*, pose – one of his legs planted on the head of either the dwarf Apasmara or a lion.

This great panel portrays several sentiments: the heroic expression of Tripurantaka's face and form, and of the vigorous *rakshasas* in action; the sorrowful faces of the women clinging in despair to the demons; the spirit of wonder among the gods surrounding Siva; and the sense of the grotesque in the attitude of the dwarf *ganas* and of Ganesa making haste on his mouse. The Cholas were impressive conquerors, and Rajaraja himself was greatest warrior of them all, and it is fitting that the mighty warrior god Tripurantaka is glorified here, virtually as the keynote of Chola power.

The painting's colours are soft and subdued, its lines are firm and sinewy and the expression vivid and true to life; above all, there is an ease in the charming contours of the figures. They constitute the most valuable document of the painter's art during the days of the early Cholas; and it is interesting to note that all the grace of south Indian classical painting as displayed in earlier Pandya paintings at Sittannavasal, and Pallava paintings at Panamalai and Kanchipuram, is continued in the present series.

Above left: Parvati with linga, *east of the* garbhagriha
Left: Chola painting of Nataraja dancing in the golden hall at Chidambaram, *in the* pradakshina

The highest achievement in plastic arts of the Chola period is revealed in the unfinished series of eighty-one of the one hundred and eight fine *karanas*, or dance-poses, from the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata, carved around the inner walls of the temple's first floor. These form an invaluable part of the history of Indian art, and are the predecessors of the labelled dance-poses on the Chidambaram *gopuras*. An important difference, however, is that at Thanjavur Siva himself, the lord of dance (Nataraja), is depicted as the dancer.

Left: *Chola painting depicting the celestial elephant, Airavata*

Upper pradakshina *of the temple, Siva performing the different* karanas

The temples of Devi near the Nandi-*mandapa*, and of Subrahmanya towards the north-west, are later additions – the former was built during the time of Konerinmaikondan, a Pandya, in the thirteenth century, and the latter during the Nayaka period in the seventeenth century. The Subrahmanya temple has exquisite carvings and is an excellent example of south Indian temple-architecture in the late medieval period. The shrine of Ganesa, towards the south-west and the *mandapa* of Nataraja towards the north-east are both attributed to the Marathas and dated to the eighteenth century.

In the words of K. A. Nilkanta Sastri, 'When we recall the nature and extent of the efforts and sacrifices that must have gone into the construction of this magnificent temple… and the manner in which numerous villages all over the empire were linked with the daily routine of the temple… when we consider further, how all the learning and the arts that flourished in the country were impressed into the service of the temple, we cannot fail to observe how the Great Temple had come to hold, from its very inception, a prominent place in the polity of the land. The temple was meant to dominate Thanjavur as Thanjavur dominated the rest of South India at the time: it was indeed the masterpiece of Rajaraja's rule.'

Top: *Subrahmanya shrine from the Nayaka period inside the Brihadisvara complex*
Above: *Durga slaying the demon on the walls of the Subrahmanya shrine*
Right: *Vishnu Durga on the walls of the Subrahmanya shrine*

BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE

GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM

The great monument at Gangaikondacholapuram, the Brihadisvara Gangaikondacholesvara temple, rears its head nobly and proclaims the imperial dignity of the capital that Rajendra I, son of Rajaraja, established after his victorious march up to the river Ganga in eastern India. The capital itself has disappeared today, and even the emperor's palace exists only in ruins marked by brick debris at a place called Ulkottai about 1.5 km away from the temple, where even today a mound called Maligaimedu, 'palace-mound', supplies bricks to villages. Both the capital and the palace were completed between 1023 and 1029, while the temple was completed and consecrated by Rajendra in his twenty-third regnal year, 1035. Gangaikondacholapuram remained a major administrative centre of the Cholas till the middle of the thirteenth century.

After the fall of the Cholas in the middle of the thirteenth century, Gangaikondacholapuram came under the Pandyas and, later, under the Vijayanagara empire. Much later, in the eighteenth century, French and English forces invaded this region and used the temple as a fort, as a result of which the monument suffered considerable damage. The bastions outside the enclosure walls on the west were erected during these wars.

Nearby, another village has a large tank called Tottikulam, excavated by the king; and about 1.5 km to the south of the temple is a third village, Vanadipattam, 'place of fireworks', believed to be where fireworks for temple-festivals were made. Meikavalputtur, 1.5 km to the temple's east, is so named because it was the place for the watchman of the temple. A fifth village, 1.5 km beyond Meikavalputtur, is called Tirthakulam and had the *teppakulam*, a tank used for floating the barge during temple-festivals.

Top: Gajalakshmi on the south side of the mahamandapa
Left: Brihadisvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram

About 3 km to the west is a large water-reservoir called Ponneri, now in ruins. The sacred waters of the Ganga brought here by Rajendra must have been poured into either this tank, or the reservoir outside the temple's *gopura*, which is also dilapidated.

A majestic *gopura* conserved up to the *prastana* level greets the visitor. Entering through the *gopura*, one sees a huge Nandi, beyond the *bali-pitha*. Unlike its counterpart at Thanjavur, this sculpture is not monolithic.

Magnificent Nandi, Gangaikondacholapuram

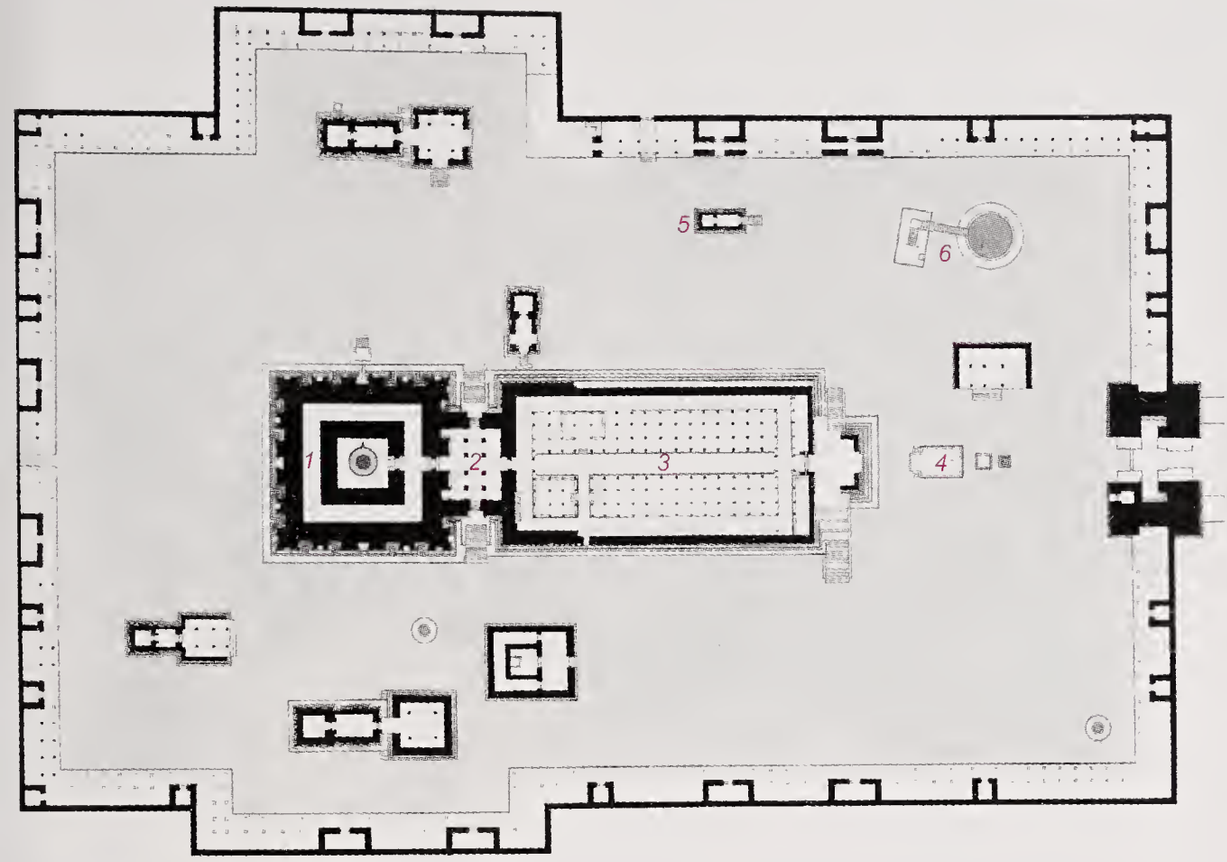
The temple itself forms a rectangle approximately 106 m long and 30 m wide, composed primarily of a *maha-mandapa* and *garbhagriha*, square in plan. Inside, the *garbhagriha* measures 8.25 square m, while the *maha-mandapa* at the interior of the eastern end measures about 75 m from the exterior face of the *garbhagriha*.

As at Thanjavur two flights of steps, on the northern and southern sides, lead up to two *dvarapalas* – huge monoliths guarding the first entrance – and to a long, closed *mandapa*. The plinth of the entire *mandapa*, up to the *ardha-mandapa* and *mukha-mandapa* of the main temple, is a part of the original construction, though its wall appears to have been renovated. The pillars and platform are later additions.

Two flights of steps lead to the *ardha-mandapa* from the north and south. Here, the *mukha-mandapa* is guarded on either side by two pairs of *dvarapalas*, and a third pair may be seen at the eastern entrance, leading from the main *mandapa* to the *mukha-mandapa*. Yet another pair of colossal *dvarapalas* guard the entrance to the sanctum.

The eastern walls of the *mukha-mandapa*, on either side, are decorated with carvings of Siva in different aspects of *anugraha* (favour), including: Vishnvanugraha-murti (bestowing grace on Vishnu, who worships him with his lotus-eye), Ravananugraha-murti (blessing Ravana, who is penitent after having raised mount Kailasa), Devyanugraha-murti (bestowing grace on Devi, who worships the *linga*), Kalyanasundara-murti (going to his marriage, attended by *bhuta-ganas* and goblins; and the ceremony with all its rejoicing), Markandeyanugraha-murti (blessing his devotee Markandeya by rescuing him from Yama, the god of death) and Chandesanugraha-murti (blessing Chandesa, who cut off his own father's legs for interfering with his worship of Siva, and bathed the *linga* with milk from the cows in his care).

To the north-east is a beautiful, large panel, a masterpiece of Chola art, which shows Siva bestowing his grace on Chandikesvara.



1. Garbhagriha 2. Ardha-mandapa 3. Maha-mandapa 4. Nandi 5. Durga shrine 6. Simhakeni

Above: Plan of the Brihadisvara temple complex.
Below: Tenkailasa shrine within the temple complex

The temple *vimana* is 54.86 m high with nine receding tiers, topped with a *sikhara* with a design of lotus petals and a gold-coated *stupi* with a lotus bud; and follows its predecessor at Thanjavur in arrangement. However, while the latter is tall and stately, with a straight and severe contour suggestive of strength, this temple is shorter and its contour is more graceful and delicate, and somewhat feminine in its lack of angularity. In the words of Percy Brown: 'Without doubt the tall pyramidal *vimana* which towers over the western end is a superb achievement.... There is a voluptuousness in the... structure, the beauty of ripe femininity.... Stately and formal as an epic may epitomize the Tanjore *vimana*, while [Gangaikondacholapuram]... has all the sensuous passion of an eastern lyric.... Each is the final and absolute vision of its creator made manifest through the medium of structural form, the one symbolizing conscious might, the other sub-conscious grace, but both dictated by that "divinity which has seized the soul".'

There are fewer sculptures here than in Thanjavur, but they are of the same nature. Here, too, there are representations of princely warriors with swords and shields. Lakshmi and Sarasvati are shown seated in niches as at Thanjavur. In the northern and southern niches of the central shrine are Bhikshatana-murti and Chandesanugraha-murti, the former disfigured with a plaster-coat.

Left: Chandesanugraha-murti, *on the north-eastern side. Here, Rajendra Chola is shown being blessed by Siva*
Above: Ganesa *on one of the doorways of the temple*

In the southern niches, a figure, presumably of Dakshina-murti, is missing. The rest represent dancing Ganesa, Ardhanarisvara beside his bull, Hari-Hara and Nataraja dancing with Kali and Bhringi, attended by *ganas* while Karaikkalammaiyar plays the cymbals. On the sides of the niche Vishnu plays the drum, Ganesa and Karttikeya approach on their vehicles, and Devi, her arm resting on the bull beside her, watches the dance.

Nataraja on the southern side of the vimana

To the west is Siva as Gangadhara, appeasing Devi who is forlorn and sullen because her lord received Ganga on his matted locks. Carvings on the sides of these niches narrate the story of Bhagiratha's penance to bring Ganga down to earth. Other figures include: Lingodbhava, Vishnu with his consorts, and Karttikeya, or Indra, as well as Siva as Uma-sahita. On the walls of the niche that shows Uma-sahita, Vishnu is seen adoring Siva by offering his eye as a flower.

The northern niches contain figures of Kalantaka, with the story of Markandeya on the sides of the niche, eight-armed Mahishamardini standing with her lion, Brahma with a beard accompanied by his consorts Savitri and Sarasvati, eight-armed Bhairava, Siva as Madanantaka burning Manmatha, one hand in the *tarjani* (threatening) attitude and Manmatha and his consort Rati, the former first shooting a bow, then helpless, while other gods intervene on his behalf.

Above: Brahma flanked by Sarasvati and Savitri on the northern wall of the vimana
Left: Dvarapalas *guarding the entrance to the main temple*

At the base of the temple, the lowest series of panels shows seated lions, each with one paw raised and rearing itself in an attitude usually found in Pallava temples of the time of Rajasimha (690-715), and with analogues at Prambanan in Indonesia.

The niches are arranged in the same fashion as at Thanjavur: a large central niche flanked on each side by two smaller niches, all projecting out of the main wall, and a *kumbha-panjara* pattern between each pair. The roof-forms on separate tiers, in the shape of *sala, koshtha* and *kudu*, are particularly noteworthy. The eaves of the lowest niches contain bracket-figures of the *ganas* of Siva and rearing lions. The principal niche on each side is devoted to the gods of the Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva: Siva Dakshina-murti on the south, and Vishnu and Brahma with consorts on the west and north respectively. The bays of the niches are decorated at every stage with rows of *yalis*, and there are *makara*-heads at the extreme ends, from which warriors come forth. The niche-tops are decorated in a circular fashion, as at Thanjavur.

The temple-base below the *yali*-friezes is covered with inscriptions, though not as completely as at Thanjavur. The niches contain various repeated iconographic forms in different orders, as well as other figures such as Varaha rescuing the Earth. The space for these representations was created by using the space reserved for *kumbha-panjaras* in other niches in addition to the five main niches.

Of the twelve complete and deciphered inscriptions from the temple, none relate to emperor Rajendra. The earliest and longest inscription is of Virarajendra Chola, the third son of Rajendra, and records gifts of land in a number of villages in the empire, the proceeds of which were used for worship and maintenance of this temple. Two other orders concern Rajadhiraja I, son and successor of Rajendra, and reveal that most of the lands and proceeds recorded here are also recorded in the Thanjavur inscription of Rajaraja as gifts to the temple of Thanjavur. The inscription is of considerable value as it mentions the names of various divisions of the Chola empire, and a long list of officers who were in charge of administration, as well as names of various temples, tanks, colonies, irrigation channels, cremation grounds and more, thus furnishing details for a study of the contemporary history of these regions. Rajendra is referred to here as *Purvadesamam Gangaiyam, Kadaramam Kondarulina Ayyar* – the father, the victor of Purvadesa, Gangai and Kadaram.

Other inscriptions are from the times of Kulottunga I and III; a Pandya ruler named Jatavarman Sundara Pandya, who established a special worship called *Sundara Pandya sandhi* at the temple; and Prauda Virupaksha, the son of Mallikarjuna, a Vijayanagara ruler.

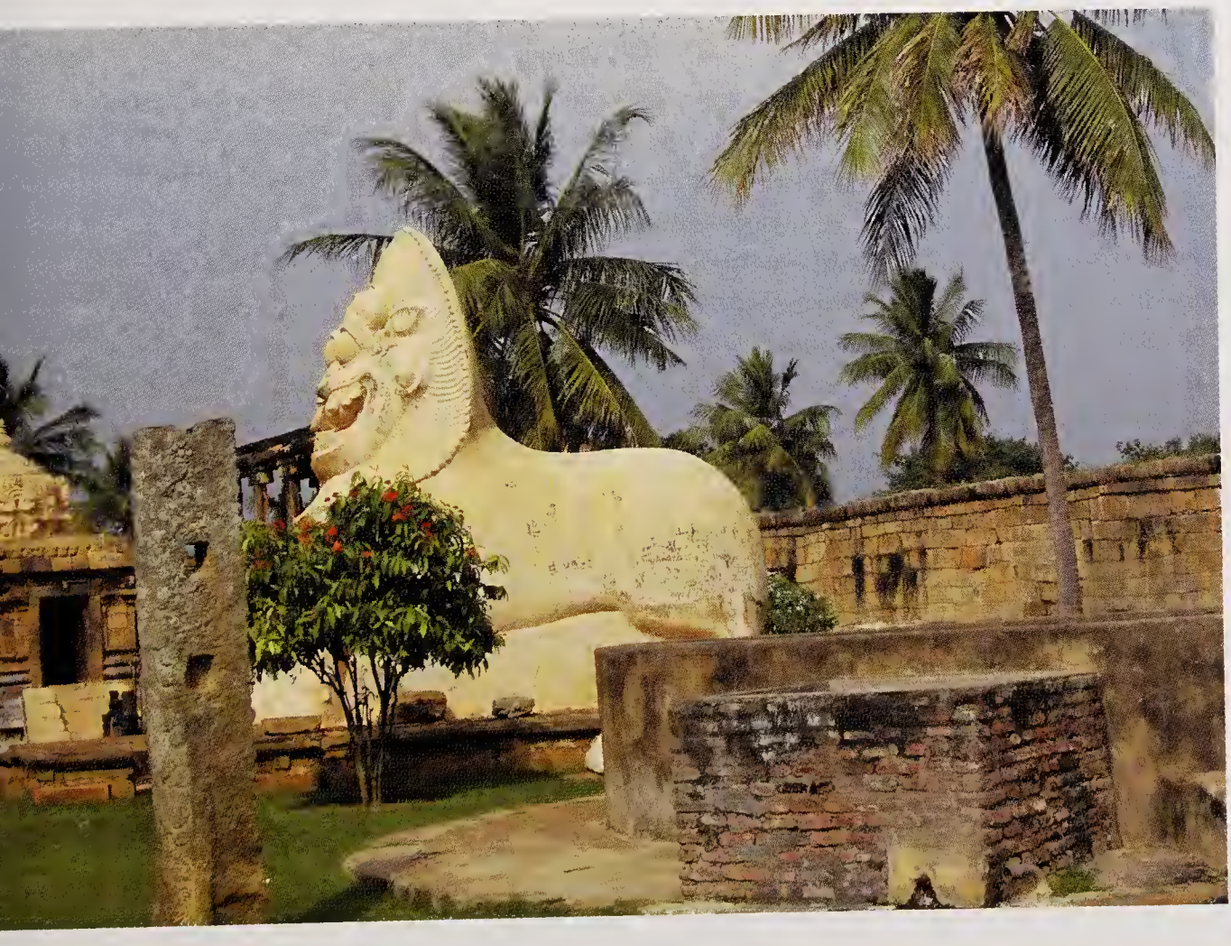
A shrine to the north of the main temple is dedicated to Chandikesvara and contains a large, fine carving that represents this steward of Siva's household. There are two other shrines to the north and south, contemporary with the main temple. There is no deity in the southern shrine, but the northern shrine has an image of Devi, dated to a later period. It is now the Amman temple of the goddess Brihannayaki, and resembles the Thanjavur model rather than the main shrine. The Devi (*Amman* in Tamil) is looked upon and worshipped as the consort of the deity in the main temple.

This shrine was originally intended for Siva, as indicated by the bull guarding its door. Interestingly, the bull is quite different from those of Chola workmanship, and resembles the work of the earlier Chalukya period. The *dvarapalas* in the two shrines and the images in the niches, wherever they are extant, are contemporary with, but less carefully executed than, those in the main temple.

To the south-west of the main temple is a small temple with a large image of Ganesa, his trunk curling around sweets (*modaka*), as is usual in some early Chola representations of the deity.

Beyond and to the north of the shrine of Chandikesvara is another shrine, which houses a fine early image of Mahishamardini. Further away is a large lion made of plastered brickwork. A flight of steps runs through its body and leads into a large well, known as Simhakinar. A popular story relates that the Chola emperor poured water from the Ganga into this well so there would be a perpetual supply to bathe (*abhisheka*) the deity.

The Simhakinar tank in the temple complex



Of the bronzes in the temple the following are particularly noteworthy: a large Somaskanda, Bhogasakti-devi, another Devi and Mahasena, or Karttikeya, as a war-god carrying a *vajra*, shield and cock. The significance of this remarkable figure of the war-god to the royal warrior Rajendra cannot be underestimated.

A unique slab with the nine planets (*navagraha*) in the large temple, hidden in total darkness, bears eloquent testimony to Rajendra's cosmopolitan spirit: after his northern conquests, the emperor combined northern and southern astrological elements to produce this most interesting group. This solar alter, called *Saura Pitha* in *Agamic* texts, consists of a fully open lotus on a square pedestal in two tiers. The upper tier carries eight deities, considered the eight planets, which, together with the centre representing *Surya* constitute the *navagrahas*. The lower tier is modelled as a chariot with wheels on either side, drawn by seven horses and driven by Aruna, the charioteer of the sun god Surya.

The most remarkable carving here, the Chandesanugraha-murti, is suggestive of the laurels won by Rajendra through the grace of Siva, and he appears to humbly present himself as a devotee to the Lord who blessed Chandesa.

Left: View of the vimana *from the first floor of the* maha-mandapa
Above: The navagraha *slab*

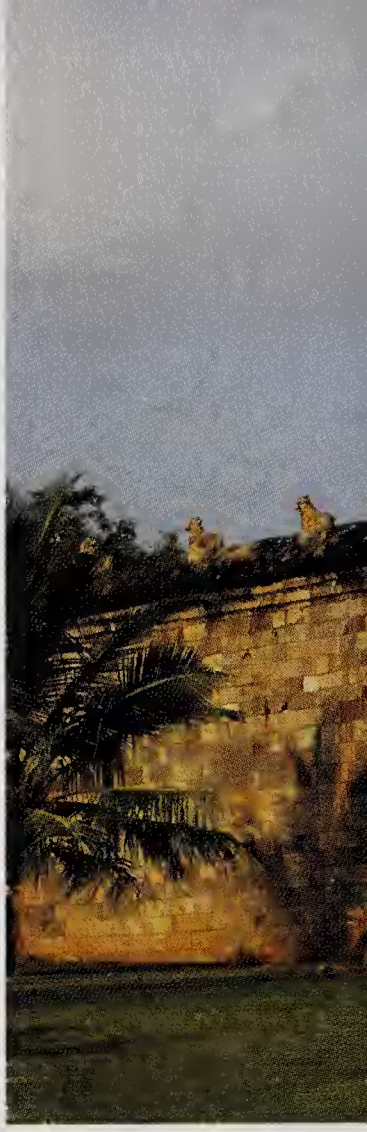
AIRAVATESVARA TEMPLE

DARASURAM

Darasuram is located in the Palaiyarai region, which remained an important centre of Chola administration even when new capitals such as Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram were established. Darasuram became a temple settlement of great importance, centred around a Siva shrine built by Rajaraja II in the twelfth century. This is the third in line of the grand stone *vimanas* built by the imperial Cholas, and its compound wall measures 105 m east-west and 67 m north-south. The *vimana* is about 24 m high, with five diminishing tiers. Above the fifth tier rests the circular *griva* with niches at the cardinal points flanked by outfacing Nandis at the corners, and surmounted by a dome, the *sikhara* and metal *stupi*.

View of the agra-mandapa of the Airavatesvara temple, Darasuram

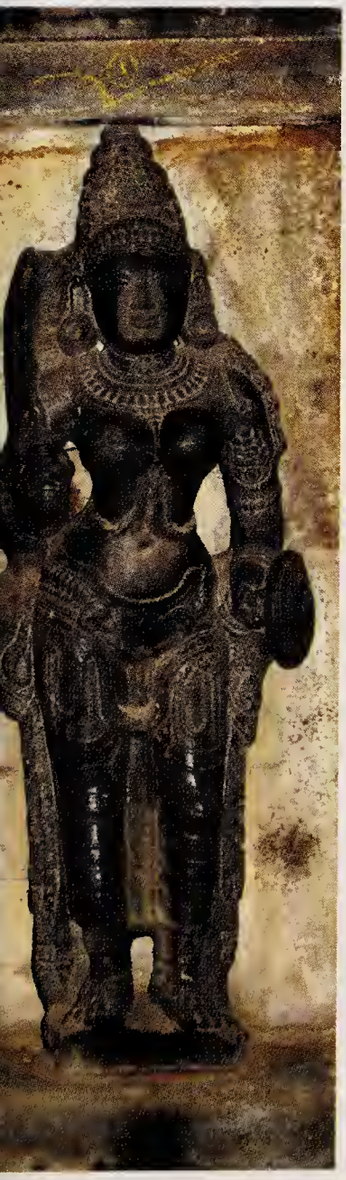
As one enters the Airavatesvara temple, one finds a large *gopura*. Its upper portion is completely lost, but its original form may can be gauged from the fully preserved *gopura* inside. The larger *prakara*-wall all around the temple, decorated at intervals with couchant bulls, is a continuation of this second *gopura*. Pillars in a row support the *gopura*, and these are decorated with some fine carvings of lovely *apsaras*, Siva-*ganas* and other motifs. Beyond the *gopura* is a large *bali-pitha* with beautiful lotus-petal decorations. To one side of it, just behind the large Nandi, is a quaint, standing dwarf Siva-*gana* blowing on a conch. Both the Nandi and the Siva-*gana* are fine artistic creations. Long narrow strips of frieze adorned with a series of miniature figures dancing in lovely poses to musical accompaniment, provide the key-note of this temple's decoration: *nitya-vinoda*, perpetual entertainment.



On either side of the entrance are small balustrades, intended to flank steps (now missing), with beautiful *makara*-decorations on their exteriors. Each *makara* has a floriated tail, short legs and curled-up snout, with a pair of dwarf *gana*-riders, and the series forms a lovely motif.

At the entrance there is a beautiful *mandapa* with a number of pillars approached through an extension towards the south, and equipped with flights of steps to the east and west. The exteriors of the balustrades for these steps are exquisitely decorated with a long curling trunk coming

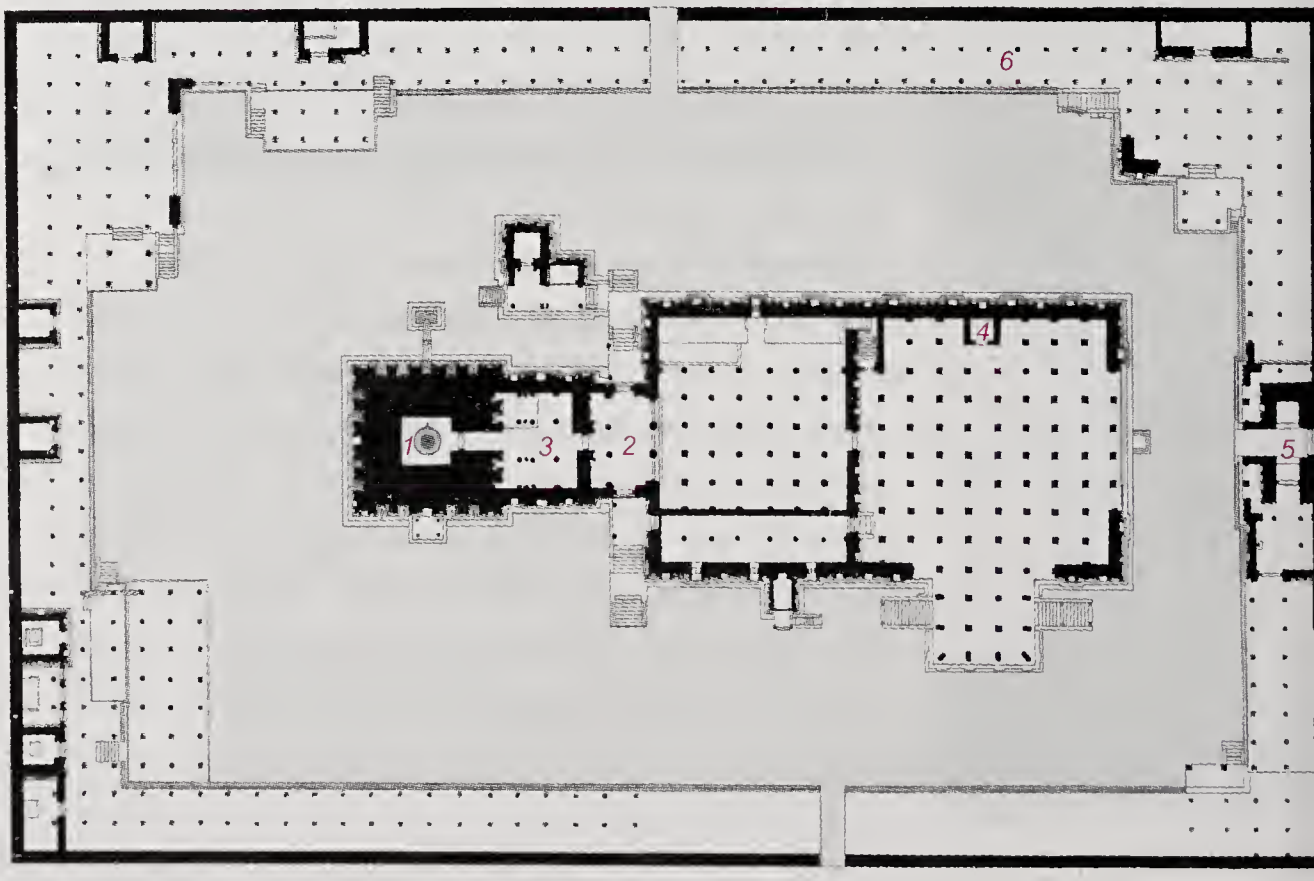
Above: View of the vimana *from outside the temple walls*
Left: View of the gopura



out of a lion-head; and a similar design running parallel to the trunk of an elephant, lost in the open jaws of a *makara* whose floriated tail is curled up, to balance the complete design. The elephant is beautifully decorated and mounted by dwarf *ganas*, viz. the *sankha-* and *padma-nidhis*.

The *mandapa's* eight outer pillars are supported by squatting *yalis* with their trunks curled up and pronounced abaci; while the lotus-petal decorations below have prominent petal-tips. The pillar capitals, like other pillars in the *mandapa*, show the beginnings of the *bodhika*-decoration, which, in late Chola and Vijayanagara periods, develops into the lotus-decoration. Each of the four inner pillars is divided into sections, three oblong and two polygonal. The decoration, which later develops into the *naga-bandha*, is just discernable and, as in other early Chola structures, consists of a pattern of double-geese. The rectangular portions of the pillars are decorated with small panels illustrating mythological stories such as the attack of Manmatha, the penance of Parvati, the prayer of the gods for a son of Siva, the birth of Kumara, Siva's marriage, his fight with the *asuras* and more. On four pillars that lead to the extension of the *mandapa* there are short, repeated inscriptions describing it as *svasti sri-Raja-gambhiram tiru-mandapam*.

1. Garbhagriha 2. Ardha-mandapa 3. Antarala 4. Amman shrine
5. Gopura 6. Cloister prakara



If the elephants on the sides of the balustrades of the steps mentioned above are lovely carvings, there are equally impressive galloping horses, one on either side, of the *mandapa*-extension, immediately beside the flight of steps. Also known as the *Raja-gambhiran tiru-mandapam* after Rajaraja II, this *agra-mandapa* is conceived as the chariot of Tripurantaka – with wheels, hubs and spokes carved in relief, drawn by caparisoned horses.

Left page top: The vimana *from the south*
Above: Koshtha *image of Lingodbhava on the west side of the* vimana
Left: Plan of the Airavatesvara temple, Darasuram

The form has precedence in a temple near Gangaikondacholapuram as well as two shrines in Chidambaram and Tukkachchi. It is also interesting that over a hundred years after the completion of Darasuram, it was a distant descendent of the Chola emperor Kulottunga I who built the Konark temple with its giant chariot *mandapa* in Orissa. A chariot shaped *mandapa* also exists in Hampi, Vijayanagara.

The base of the *mandapa*-extension is decorated in front with panels of: Siva fighting the Tripuras from his chariot, and Siva as Kalantaka fighting Yama to protect the son of Mrikandu, whom he had blessed with a long life; Siva burning Kama, who dared attack Siva with his flowery bow and arrow, as Kama's lovely queens, including Rati, and other gods pray for his life; and the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice by Virabhadra. Above this, at intervals in five niches, are Agni, Indra, Brahma, Vishnu and Vayu, all standing with hands in the attitude of reverence towards Siva. It should be noted that the original plan of the steps east of the *mandapa* has been spoilt by later renovations, and their original symmetry is now lost.

The main *mandapa* is a continuation of the *mukha-mandapa* of the main shrine. The outer faces of its walls on the northern side and on the extreme ends of the eastern and southern sides, as in other parts of the temple, are covered with the usual pattern of niches and pilasters. The outer walls of the second *mandapa* are entirely closed and all its pillars are inside. Here too the outer walls are decorated with a pattern of alternating niches and pilasters, with a main niche for every pair of subsidiary niches. The main *mandapa* is decorated to the east with a pair of dwarf *yakshas* guarding *padma-* and *sankha-nidhis* in niches on either side. These figures, like all the other special forms of deities in the niches, are made of fine-grained black basalt, thus distinguished from the lighter coloured granite used in the rest of the structure.

Martanda Bhairava on the southern wall of the maha-mandapa

The pillars of the first (main) *mandapa* have beautiful patterns of decorative creepers so arranged that the circular medallions created contain figures dancing in diverse poses, musicians and sometimes even forms of deities such as Gangadhara and Tripurantaka. These figures also adorn panels arranged in tiers of niches and *salas* on the sides of other pillars. Even where the pillars have purely decorative patterns, such figures, mostly in dance-poses or playing musical instruments, are deftly introduced into them.

The ceiling has square and rectangular patterns, bands of which are all filled with decorative designs. Almost all the central medallions contain similar dancing and musical groups. The pillar-capitals here bear the precursors of the *bodhika*-type, and the ornamental precursors of the *naga-bandha* are also visible.

In the next *mandapa,* which leads to the *ardha-mandapa* and the main shrine, there are niches containing Devi with lotus, *ratna-kalasa* (pot filled with gems) and Nandikesvara standing with hands in adoration on one side, and saint Kannappa and seated Sarasvati on the other. The centre of the northern side has been improvised into a cell for Devi. The *chauri*-holding *dvara-palikas*, fixed on either side of the improvised doorway, are lovely and belong to the same period as the other fine sculptures arranged in the niches of the main temple. The pillars in the *mandapa* adjoining the main one are somewhat simpler, notwithstanding their polygonal shape, the flower-petal decorations at intervals and the corbels, which recall the Chalukya type.

View of the agra-mandapa *from the east*

The *mukha-mandapa* is approached by long flights of steps from the north and south, and marks the end of the *mandapas* and the beginning of the main shrine. Here there is a couchant Nandi, smaller than the one at the start of the main *mandapa*. The *dvarapalas* of the main shrine are depicted as furious and armed with huge clubs. Their four hands are in the threatening attitude (*tarjani*), they have tusks and carry *trisulas* on their bound-up hair, which is decorated with the lion-head design. The garland-decoration of their *yajnopavita* also recalls Chalukya influence.

The six-headed Kumara standing to the left of the main cell's entrance is a fine sculpture.

The walls of the *mandapa* and main shrine contain niches, some of which still have exquisite specimens of early Chola sculpture; the others either have no images or poor modern substitutes in brick-and-plaster. Noteworthy Chola specimens include: a fine Ardhanarisvara, unique among its kind with three faces and eight arms; a four-armed Nagaraja with snake-hoods over his head and hands joined in adoration; Agastya, the dwarf sage, seated with one of his hands in the teaching attitude and the other carrying a water-vessel; another seated sage carrying a rosary and manuscript; dancing Martanda-Bhairava or Aghora-Virabhadra with four hands, three heads and a terrible countenance; standing Ganesa; Dakshina-murti attended by sages seated under a banyan-tree and expounding the highest truth; Lingodbhava Siva, issuing from a flaming pillar, while Brahma and Vishnu, unable to reach the top and bottom, adore the *linga*; Brahma; eight-armed Durga on the severed head of the buffalo-demon; seated Devi as Bhuvanesvari carrying *pasa* and *ankusa* in two hands, the other two being in *abhaya* and *varada*; Siva as Tripurantaka, carrying the axe, deer, bow and arrow; multi-armed Gajantaka destroying a demon in the guise of an elephant and dancing against the spread-out hide of the

The three-faced Candesa

animal in the *bhujanga-trasita* pose while Devi shrinks away from him in fear; Bhairava with six arms standing with his dog behind him; a sage carrying a water-vessel and teaching two disciples; and Mahesa-murti seated with three heads and four arms carrying the spear, axe, rosary and water-vessel. All these sculptures, made of polished black basalt, display exquisite workmanship.

Of particular interest among these, in a shrine attached to the southern wall of the *mandapa*, is a stone image of Siva as Sarabha-murti. The Sarabha cult represents a phase in which Saivism dominated Vaishnavism, symbolized by Sarabhesvara subduing the ferocious Narasimha, an incarnation of Vishnu.

Of the sides of the main shrine it should be said that the lower half of the base is of the same type all over, including the *mandapas*. The lowest series of panels above the lotus-petal decoration is divided by decorative bands which contain *yalis*, couchant or rearing, in pairs or single; women dancing to music; dwarf *ganas* in varied poses, dancing, playing drums, blowing conchs, carrying the *chauri* or holding their hands in wonder, often in the company of a bull. Above this is a long *yali*-frieze, which is repeated a little below the niches. There are miniature decorative carvings a little below the second row *of yalis*, above it, and immediately below the niches. In the main shrine the carvings below the niches depict stories of Saivite saints, some of which are labelled in Tamil. Separating these scenes are miniature carvings of dancing figures, and Siva or Devi in different attitudes.

Above left: Depiction of a yoga pose
Left: Bhima rescuing Draupadi
Below: Dwarf ganas *in varied poses, along the sides of the main shrine*

On the outer walls, on either side of the niches, there are fine carved figures corresponding to those enshrined in the niches, simulating the tradition of the earlier temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. Thus, Ganesa's niche is flanked by *bhuta-ganas,* dwarf attendants, carrying offerings with the deity's vehicle, the mouse; the niche of Dakshina-murti is flanked by exquisitely-carved figures of *rishis* which are, unfortunately, hidden by a later brick structure.

Below: Panel depicting Ravana shaking the Kailasa
Below right: Detail from the same panel, depicting Siva-Parvati in Kailasa

There are three niches in the main temple. The central one is the largest and has a double-pillar decoration on either side. Its top is fashioned as a *sala,* while the tops of the niches flanking it have the *koshtha*-pattern. The double-pillar decorations between these have lion-headed *kudus* on top. Between the niches and the double-pillar decorations, all of which project forward, there are *kumbha-panjara* decorations against the main wall itself. Above the niches, near the eaves, there is a whole row of dwarf *ganas*, dancing, playing musical instruments or otherwise merry. Against the roof, there are *kudus*, while gaping *bhuta*-heads serve as gargoyles, discharging water from the roof. The *kudu*- pavillion and *sala*-patterns are repeated on the tiers of the *vimana*.

All around the main shrine is a broad strip, 3.66 m wide, paved with granite slabs, and a low wall, 25.40 cm high, of the same material. The latter is beautifully carved with lotus-patterns and Nandis seated in between; but, unfortunately, this beautiful row of Nandis is badly mutilated. The outlets for water placed at intervals reveals that this was intended to be a sort of a pleasant water-receptacle, which would give the idea of a pool surrounding the temple in spring and keep the atmosphere cool in summer. A number of circular rings with low rims, carved out of stone, appear to have been lamps.

Nataraja on the outer walls of the agra-mandapa

The gargoyle that discharges water from the main cell is on the north. It is long, has a dip and double course, is decorated with two lion-head motifs, one at the source and the other where it starts the lower course at the point of the dip, and discharges water into a large well-carved water-reservoir with figures of dancing *ganas* on the sides. The *gomukha* is supported at the base by a caryatid dwarf *gana*, as in the gargoyle in the temple at Thanjavur (though the figure here is standing), by a rearing *yali* and triple *ganas* at the end.

Close to the main temple, near this gargoyle, is the shrine of Chandikesvara, similar to the one at Thanjavur.

The *prakara*-wall surrounding the large paved courtyard is carved on the inside with a beautiful series of *mandapa*-decorations, which consist mainly of a long row of pillar-cloisters, with cells at intervals for deities, some of which have disappeared. At the four corners the cloisters are enlarged and embellished into *mandapas*. These mandapas are approached by steps decorated with balustrades, with interesting motifs. For instance, there is a ferocious lion pouncing on an elephant with a curled-up trunk, lost in the mouth of a *makara,* its sides hidden at those points where a niche or trellis-window has been added for decoration. The base, as usual, has fine panels showing scenes of dance, jugglery, and so on. All these elements are best seen in the north-west *mandapa*. Towards the north-west there is a similar *mandapa*, with intricately decorated pillars; and the ceiling is covered with a profusion of beautiful panels and medallions of dancers and musicians.

The top of this *mandapa* is decorated with a *sala*-roof suggesting Nataraja's *sabha*. This is the temple's *natya-mandapa* – a fact clearly borne out not only by the sculptures on the pillars and ceiling but also by a carving on the base of Vishnu playing the drum before the *mandapa*. Now conserved, this must have been where the Nataraja bronze was originally housed. Beyond this, to the east, is the *yaga-sala*, and further on is a representation of a king and queen, in addition to figures of deities. The two portrait-statues are probably intended to represent either Virarajendra or Rajaraja II, and his queen.

In the cloistered hall to the west of the *natya-mandapa* there is a remarkable group of large carvings, representing Siva as Kankala-murti, and a number of *rishi-patnis* – the wives of the sages of Daruka-vana, who attended on Siva and were astonished by his beauty. The garments of one of the women in a pair are slipping off and the other has a finger on her lips, indicative of wonder while *gana*-dwarfs are playing drums or sounding gongs in quaint and picturesque attitudes. Kankala-murti himself is calm and serene, as he fondles a deer with one of his hands, while a dwarf-attendant carries his begging bowl. Some of the women carry ladles for offering food to the divine beggar. The composition is one of the great masterpieces of Chola art. There are also carvings of Manmatha and Rati on a chariot, and of Kannappa-nayanar, the saintly hunter.

On the western half of the southern *prakara*-wall are represented one hundred and eight Siva-*charyas* (Saiva saints), with the names and short descriptions of each incised below them. They were probably appointed to sing *Devaram* hymns in the temple.

Left: Nayaka painting on the outer wall of the temple
Top: Carvings on a pillar depicting the marriage of Siva and Parvati

Above: Panel depicting Siva consoling Parvati
Below: Nagaraja on the southern side of the agra-mandapa

In the roofs of the niches, all along the wall of the *mandapa* to the north, there are representations of *rishis*. These, along with similar figures within the niches, indicate an element of peace and tranquillity, as opposed to the heroic quality which marks the sculpture at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. The long series of stories from the *Siva-purana* and the Siva devotees portrayed here also suggest the same theme. It should be noted that this was the period when stories of Saiva kings and the sacred *Devaram* hymns were collected together. It is also not unlikely that the name Darasuram has something to do with Daruka-*vana*, especially considering the magnificent group of sculptures representing Kankala and the *rishi-patnis* described above.

The temple's *linga* is called Rajarajesvaram-udayar and it is said that the temple was erected by Rajaraja himself to please a cowherdess who had donated the huge *sikhara* stone at Thanjavur, and subsequently desired that a temple be constructed in her village.

Entrance to the agra-mandapa *of the Amman shrine*

The Deivanayaki Amman shrine

Adjacent to Airavatesvara is a shrine to Devi, contemporary with the main temple. Dedicated to Parvati or Deivanayaki Amman, the outer *prakara*-wall of the shrine measures about 70 m west-east and 30 m north-south. Essentially the same as the main temple, its *vimana* has three tiers, its niches contain Devi images and it exhibits features which place it among the Amman shrines of a slightly later period.

At the entrance, balustrade-decoration of *yalis* with riders on either side are fine works of art. Some lattice-window carvings are also worthy of note. The gargoyle, which presents a dwarf *gana* in quaint pose and functions both to receive water into the cell and carry it out, is interesting. The tiny dance-figures in the lattice-windows and the *naga*-decoration are particularly remarkable. The *maha-dvara* is partially conserved; its empty niches bear inscriptions naming the thirty-six deities they once contained.

The profusion of dance and musical scenes in both shrines cannot but attract the visitor's attention. The Chola kings were great patrons of dance and music, and even the slightly later *gopuras* at Chidambaram, with their dance-figures that illustrate the various *sthanas* and *karanas* of Bharata's *Natya-sastra*, bear out this exuberance of *natya*-figures in the embellishment of the temples.

There are also similarities with the artistic traditions of Borobudur and Prambanan in Indonesia here, particularly in the scenes that narrate stories of the Saiva saints, with depictions of temples, ponds or rivers full of fish, shells and other aquatic animals (in one case even a crocodile), along with several figures of kings with royal paraphernalia, such as peacock-feather parasols, sages and Brahmanas with umbrellas in their hands, and similar themes. In fact, even the lions in the lowermost panels of the base of the main shrine are strongly reminiscent of their counterparts at Prambanan. This is not surprising since there was considerable intercourse between the Eastern Archipelago and India during the Chola period, most of these islands having been under Chola rule for some period of time.

Detail of yali *in the Amman temple outside the main temple complex*

Rashtrakuta and Chalukya styles are recalled by certain decorative elements, particularly the creeper-patterns that create medallions for dance-figures on the pillars and some pillar-capitals. This is easily accounted for by the constant inroads that the Cholas, Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas made into each others' territories. Thus a *dvarapala*, originally in the Darasuram temple but now installed in the Thanjavur temple, is of Chalukya workmanship and contains an inscription on its pedestal in early Chola letters, which records that it was brought by the Chola king as a war-trophy after the sack of Kalyanapura, the capital of the Western Chalukyas.

In sum: though the temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram were simple in design and grand in stature, their *maha-mandapas* appeared to be there only to satisfy the *Agama* requirements and the practical needs of managing the temples and state affairs conducted in them. A century later, the Melaikkadambur temple was designed purely as a chariot; and the great advancement that the Darasuram temple makes over its illustrious predecessors is to integrate the two styles. Stylistically, the Airavatesvara temple marks the transition from the full plenitude of the Chola style seen at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram – to the great temple complexes of the post-Chola era.

APPENDIX 1

STORIES OF SAIVA SAINTS

DEPICTED AT DARASURAM

Of particular interest and narrative force at the Darasuram temple is a series of stories concerning Saiva saints, illustrated in miniature panels as the top line of the base of the *vimana* and the *mandapa*. Many of these are explained by means of labels incised in characters of the period, and some of these are detailed below:

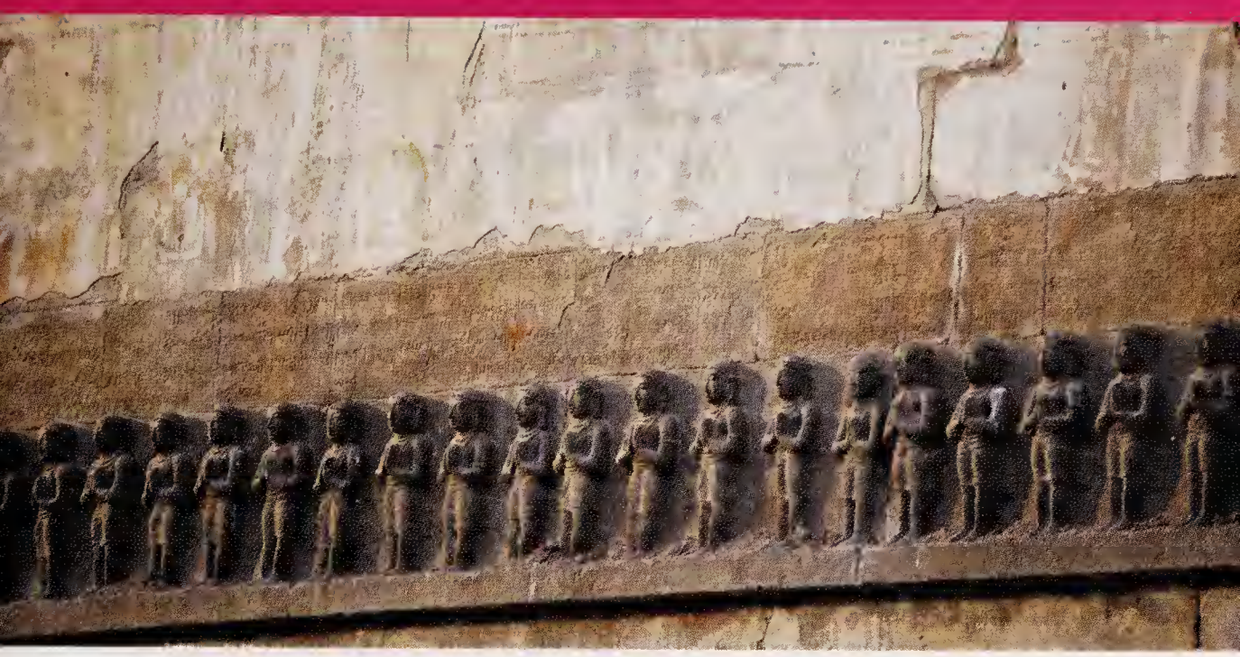
Many scenes present graphic depictions of Appar, the great saint who converted Mahendra-varman Pallava, and who is always represented holding a spud against his shoulder.

Then there is the story of Tirumular, bathing with his wife in the tank beside the temple. This is followed by the story of a saint who was fond of feeding Saiva devotees. Once Siva tested the saint by coming to him at midnight in the guise of a Brahmana and demanding food. The saint did not hesitate to feed him. The label for this story reads: *Ilaiyamarangudi Marar kadai.*

The next panel shows a saint clothed in lion-skin, carrying a rod in his hand and standing before a scale. On one side of the scale there are two figures of a man and woman in adoration, while Siva and Parvati, on Nandi, grant them *darsana*. There is also a scene of a king offering his sword to a young Saiva saint, clothed in lion-skin and carrying a staff.

The devotion of Kannappanayanar is illustrated in a panel that shows him plucking out his own eye with an arrow, as an offering.

Markandeya appears next with Yama's noose wrapped not only around the adoring saint's neck, but also around the *linga* itself. Beyond this is the story of a woman having her hair cut off as a saint watches; Siva with his consort are seen riding their bull high up in the sky. Next, there is a representation of a saint playing the flute near an elephant in a forest, surrounded by cows, when Siva and Parvati visit him on their bull. The next scene shows a devotee carefully preparing a garland, and then adoring Siva, seated in front of a temple and holding a rosary.



Saiva saints on the southern prakara wall

Then comes the legend of Nanda, the great saint who bathed in the tank and walked though fire to access the portals of Chidambaram temple. Siva and Parvati are shown on the bull, granting Nanda *darsana*. This story is labelled: *Tirunalai-povar kadai.*

Next comes the story of Tirukkuripputondar, the saintly washerman from Kanchi, whose sincerity was tested by Siva. Siva is shown in the guise of an old Brahmana, holding a staff and demanding his clothes, which could not be washed by that evening because of a storm.

Then follow scenes from the life of Chandesa. The boy-saint is shown bathing a *linga* under a tree with the milk of his cows. When his father interrupts him with anger, Chandesa, not brooking interference, cuts off his father's legs with an axe. For this he is rewarded by a Saiva saint, who winds a garland on his head. Chandesa is shown seated reverently at the feet of Siva and Parvati while he is adorned with the garland. The inscription reads: *Saynallurpillaiyar kadai.*

Next is the story of Tirujnanasambanda, the boy-saint who overcame the Jainas, by performing the miracle of floating a manuscript against the current of a stream. The Jainas are shown impaled, while the saint is depicted as a very small boy, holding cymbals and being adored by a devotee from behind. Three nude Jainas, holding flowers and other objects, are shown standing; their intention is probably to throw these objects into the stream and perform a miracle. The king is at the centre of the panel, and beyond him are the impaled, defeated Jainas.

Another carving shows a devotee, who was commanded by an aerial voice to find *ghee* to light the lamps at the Siva temple at Tiruvalur (indicated by a bull). Having failed to do so he is shown filling a vessel with water from a lotus-pond full of fish and birds. The inscription clearly reads: *Naminandi adigal.*

Then there is the story of the boy-saint Sambanda, described as *Aludaiya-pillaiyar* in the inscription. His father is questioning the boy, who points to Siva and Parvati on Nandi and explains that they fed him with divine milk.

Beyond this is the legend of the warrior Kalikkamanayanar, choosing to die on his bed rather than be cured of paralysis by Sundara-murti. Sundara-murti, in turn, attempts suicide rather than return without curing the warrior. Eventually, the one is brought to life and the other prevented from killing himself. The inscription reads: *eyarkon Kalikkamandar.*

Now appear two priests, the *homa*-fire between them, and the label: *Somasimaranar.*

Next there is a saint adoring Siva with a garland. This is the story of a Jaina who was so lost in the worship of Siva that he did not notice when he used bricks instead of flowers. It is labelled: *Sakkiyanar.* This is followed by the legend of another great Saiva devotee, who served his son's flesh to Siva when the deity came to him in disguise and demanded this ghastly food. When it was cooked, the guest refused to eat in the house of a childless couple. Finally, Siva appeared before them and restored the child to life, and the mother was greatly joyful. The label reads: *Siruttondar kadai.*

Labelled *Seramanperumal kadai* is a depiction of Seraman, the Chera king, going to Kailasa on an elephant. Beyond this are a number of scholars and a king. The inscription, in two strips, reads: *Poyyadimaiyillada pulavar* and *Kurruvanar* – all Saiva saints. The next story is described as *Pugalcholanar.* Here a saintly Chola king is so filled with sorrow at the sight of the head of a Siva devotee in heads piled before him by his victorious commander that, to expiate the sin, he takes this enemy's head on his own and enters the fire, when Siva and Parvati appear on Nandi to bless him. Beyond this is a scene from the life of a king who was fond of rewarding Saiva saints irrespective of their sincerity. He is shown in the company of six *pandaram* saints. The label reads: *Narasingamunaiyaraiyar.*

Next comes the story of Adipattan, a fisherman from Nagapattinam who would offer the best fish from his daily catch to Siva. One day he caught only a single fish, but offered even that willingly, at which Siva appeared with his consort on his bull and blessed him. The inscription reads: *Adibattar kadai.* Another illustration shows a devotee who would feed Saiva saints, and even cut off his wife's hands when she hesitated to welcome and wash the feet of their old servant, now turned a recluse and shown standing at their door. He was consequently graced by a *darsana* of Siva and Parvati on their bull. The inscription reads: *Kalikkambandar kadai.*

Panel depicting an episode in the story of Sundara

Another saint is shown driving a pair of bulls to press oil. He would take this to the Siva temple beyond the river. One day he failed to get the required oil, so he tried to feed the lamps with his own blood by cutting off his head, until Siva appeared and blessed him. The fragmentary inscription reads: *Kaliyanar.* The next story tells of Sattiyandar, a devotee of Siva, who would cut off the tongue of those who spoke ill of Saiva devotees.

A Pallava king who abandoned his throne to serve Siva is shown adoring temples at four different places. The inscription reads: *Aiyyadigal Kadavarkonar.*

This is followed by a scene illustrating the story of Kanampulandar, a saint would light lamps in temples. Once, failing to obtain money by selling grass to buy *ghee* for the lamps, he first lit the grass itself and later his own locks of hair. The next carving shows the famous author of *Tirukkovai*, who spent all his wealth in renovating temples and finally reached mount Kailasa. The inscription reads: *Kariyar.*

The next scene shows the Pandyan king Nedumaran, who was converted by his queen and minister. The inscription reads: *Nedumaranar.*

Beyond this is the sage Vayilar, seated with a rosary in his hand.

Another scene shows a king cutting off his queen's hands with a sword. This is the story of a Pallava king who mutilated his queen for having inadvertently smelt a flower intended for Siva. She had already had her nose cut off by a saint named Seruttunai for the same offence. The inscription reads: *Kalanchinganar.* The adjacent panel shows Seruttunai cutting off the queen's nose, and is labelled *Seruttunaiyandar.*

Beyond this is the story of the saintly priest of the Srivilliputtur temple, who worshipped Siva even during a great famine. Growing increasingly weak, he once dropped his water-pot on a *linga*, and the god appeared and directed him to seek and find a coin daily near the *bali-pitha*, to sustain himself. The inscription reads: *Pugalttunaiyar.*

The next scene shows a warrior killing a child with his sword, while women shout in fear and crouch away from him. He then adores Siva with Parvati on Nandi. This illustrates the story of the commander of a Chola king who killed all his people, including babies, for having consumed paddy intended for Siva during a famine, when he was away in the battlefield. The inscription reads: *Kolpuliyandar.*

The next scene shows a saint adoring several other saints – an act considered as meritorious as adoring Siva himself. The inscription reads: *Battaraippanivar.* The following scene shows devotees singing and sounding cymbals before a Siva temple. The label reads: *Paramanaiye paduvar* – which means their songs of praise are for Siva only. A similar scene shows a saint seated in contemplation near a temple from where the deity is taken out in procession, to the accompaniment of music and dance, towards the *bali-pitha* and Nandi.

The next scene shows saints adoring Siva at Tiruvarur. The inscription reads: *Tiruvarurpirandar* – which means that anyone born in the holy spot of Tiruvarur is saintly enough to be adored.

Beyond this there is a saint worshipping a *linga*, above which there is a bell hanging, and below a conch on a tripod, reminiscent of objects portrayed in Javanese sculpture. This and its inscription, *Mukhalam tirumeni tinduvar*, glorifies those who worship Siva thrice daily.

Another panel depicts the story of a Pandya king, and his queen Mangayarkarasi who, with the help of the boy-saint Sambanda, converted her husband to Saivism. The fragmentary inscription reads: *Pandimadevi.*

Then there is the story of the weaver-saint Nesandar, who would donate the produce of his loom to Saiva devotees. A beautiful sculpture beyond this shows a king adoring a temple. This is a portrait of a Chola monarch who was ranked among the saints for his devotion. The inscription reads: *Ko Singapperumal.*

The next scene illustrates the story of a devotee and his wife who played musical instruments and sang near the Siva temple at Madurai. The saint holds an early type of *vina* (interesting for the study of ancient musical instruments), and his wife plays cymbals. The inscription reads: *Tirunilakantapperumbananar.*

Beyond this are Sadaiyanar and Isainaniyar, father and mother of Sundara, whose story is illustrated in succeeding panels. Thus: an old Brahmana with a manuscript and umbrella in his hands talks to a princely youth. Inscribed *Avana-olaikattinapadi*, this illustrates how Siva came disguised as a Brahmana to fetch the Sundara-murti, on the

Left: Panel depicting an episode in the story of Sundara Below: Panel depicting Kalikkambandar kadai

day of his marriage, to the temple at Tiruvennainallur. He carried a document that proved his claim over Sundara, as also over his father and grandfather. The following scene shows some Saiva saints and a youth sounding cymbals before a temple. This illustrates the beginning of Sundara's career as a composer of hymns. The inscription reads: *Udaiyanambiyai andukondaruliyapadi.* Next, a princely youth, evidently Sundara, is shown leading a king by a temple and directing him to cross a river to reach another Siva temple. The inscription reads: *Udaiyanambikku ollenrarulinapadi.*

The next scene shows Sundara, quite princely in appearance with a peacock-feather umbrella carried by an attendant, waylaid by dacoits and robbed of the wealth he received from the Chera king. The inscription reads: *Udayanambiyai vedar valipparittavidam.* Further up, a scene shows Sundara sounding cymbals near a temple, with a number of bags piled before him. This illustrates how the thieves were commanded by the deity to restore Sundara's wealth at Tirumuruganpundi. The inscription reads: *Tirumuruganpundiyil perrapadi.*

The last scene shows a woman receiving her child from the jaws of a crocodile in a tank adjoining a temple at Avinasi. The princely figure here is saint Sundara, his hands in adoration. The scene illustrates how, by singing a hymn, Sundara caused the crocodile to disgorge the child it had swallowed. The inscription reads *Avinasiyandar mudalaivaipillai.*

APPENDIX 2

PRESENT STATE OF CONSERVATION

1. Physical appearance and structural stability

The three cultural properties have been under the protection and care of the Archaeological Survey of India for several decades: the Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur from the 1920s; the Brihadisvara temple at Gangaikondacholapuram from the 1940s; and the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram from the 1950s.

THE BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE, THANJAVUR

The Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur has had the privilege of close monitoring ever since its protection in 1922. The physical structure, stucco work and sculptural elements were regularly inspected and conserved when necessary. Routine actions consisted of maintaining a watertight outer profile; close monitoring and repair of any damaged portion of the flat terraces; conservation of stucco work after ascertaining the material composition through investigation and analysis; cleaning and maintenance of sculptural elements both inside and outside the shrines; and chemical cleaning of the inner surfaces of the shrines including the paintings in the circumambulatory passages. In 2002, the ASI approached the local municipal authorities to make over the moat that surrounds the property, in order to extend and enhance protection. All surface drainages have been desilted and reworked where necessary, leading to a clean and well maintained environment. The Sivaganga Tank which is part of the garden on the north-western side has been conserved.

THE BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE, GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM

There were a number of encroachments on the northern side of this temple, almost abutting the *prakara*-wall, as also the eastern side well within the limit of the *maha-dvara*. Routine actions such as maintaining a watertight outer profile; close monitoring and repair of damaged portions of the flat terraces; conservation of stucco after ascertaining the material composition through investigation and analysis; cleaning and maintenance of sculptural elements inside and outside the shrine; and chemical cleaning of the inner surfaces of the shrine continued but encroachment increased. However, with active cooperation from local authorities, all encroachments were removed and the cleared area was fenced, thus establishing a protective buffer zone. Another major undertaking was excavating, identifying and reconstructing all collapsed elements and pieces of the *maha-dvara* and eastern *prakara*-wall. The stucco work on the Great Nandi was conserved and partially restored after due analysis and investigation.

THE AIRAVATESVARA TEMPLE, DARASURAM

Both the shrines here have been monitored for their conservation. The initial years were devoted to conserving the structure and fabric, including the timber ceiling. The buried Nandi-*mandapa* and *bali-pitha* were exposed. The removal of accretions led to the exposure of the steps to the chariot shaped *agra-mandapa*; and the *adhishthana*. The balustraded stairs of the Amman shrine have been similarly exposed and conserved. In addition, beside routine conservation measures, the ASI concentrated on the removal of encroachments and structured archaeological excavations to establish the original layout of the complex. This led to the discovery of the eastern *maha-dvara*, which is being conserved and partially restored.

2. Maintenance of open areas in buffer zone as gardens

Traditionally all temples had extensive flower gardens and orchards attached to them. The ASI has established unobtrusive gardens in all three temples, in the areas cleared of encroachments. The existing trees have been in their original locations, and the ASI proposes to carry out detailed analysis of the subsoil profile to establish the nature of the gardens and plantations that might have existed originally.

3. *Vedic, Agamic* and religious traditions

Vedic, *Agamic* and religious traditions have continued over the years: daily, monthly and annual rituals are performed without fail. The *Kumbhabhisheka* is also performed regularly; and the appointments of head and junior priests, and supporting staff have been regularized. The recent past has witnessed a greater participation by people in some traditional rites. For example, the *Annabhisheka* at Gangaikondacholapuram is annually attended by over 30,000 devotees. So with the *pradosha puja* at Darasuram and at Thanjavur. In addition, the *Agamic* texts have been translated from Sanskrit to Tamil.

4. Living traditions of the arts in all their forms, and of crafts

The Directorate of Art and Culture under the Secretary, Tamil Development, Culture and Religious Endowments, Government of Tamil Nadu oversees the sustenance and development of arts and crafts in the state. The South Zone Cultural Centre, under the Department of Culture, Government of India, also supports and coordinates the activities to a great extent. Both departments directly and

through the Tamil Nadu Eyal Isai Nataka Manram, organize regular performances of regional dance, music and theatre, both within and outside the state. They also provide financial and material support to individuals and groups. Similarly, the Tamil Nadu Ovia Nunkalai Kuzhu organizes and promotes art camps, seminars and conferences.

Traditional performing arts such as Bharatnatyam and classical Carnatic music are integral to the life of the people. Well established associations, NGOs and *sabhas* organize performances, impart training and organize seminars and conferences. Institutions such as the prestigious 'Kalakshetra' in Chennai receive full financial support from the Central Government. A number of state universities too have departments of music offering regular courses and doctoral programmes. Many individuals and local groups make Thanjavur paintings for commercial considerations; and stone sculptures and traditional bronze casting are popular with tourists and collectors.

The Directorate of Tamil Development under the Secretary Tamil Development, Culture and Religious Endowments, Government of Tamil Nadu oversees aspects of Tamil Literature and Tamil studies. Institutions such as the Tamil University, Thanjavur, and the Madurai Kamaraj University have well structured programmes and conduct regular courses as well as specific research programmes.

GLOSSARY

abhanga – slight flexion (in the standing pose of a figure)
abhisheka – ceremonial bath
agama – treatises on architecture
alidha – the pose of a warrior, with his right leg bent forward
agra-mandapa – front hall preceeding the main hall
ankusa – elephant god
anugraha – grace and mercy
apsara – celestial nymph
ardha-mandapa –'half hall', the smaller hall connecting the shrine and the larger pillared hall (*mandapa*)
asura – demon
bali-pitha – altar for the placing of offerings
bhujanga-trasita – 'scared by snake', a dance-pose suggesting movement away from a snake out of fear
bhuta-gana – dwarfish goblin
bodhika – a corbel surmounting the capital of a pillar, like the *pushpa-bodhika*, 'corbel of flower-pattern'
chatura – a dance-pose, with the left fool slightly raised but still touching the ground.
chauri – fly-whisk
darsana – vision or visualisation
dikpala – guardian of one of the eight directions
dvarapala – doorkeeper
gana – dwarf attendant of Siva.
garbhagriha – inner or most sacred chamber of the temple, the sanctum sanctorum
gomukha – cow-face

gopura – the imposing temple-gateway.
homa – fire sacrifice
kanchuk – 'shirt-wearer', a chamberlain in the royal harem.
karanas – dance pose
koshtha – a cell or niche
koshtha-panjara – a niche decorated with a curved cage-motif (cf. *kumbha-panjara*)
kudu – the arched-window motif on roof-line with a shovel- or lion-head top
kumbha-panjara – a vase with foliage crowned by a curved, cage-like pattern, a motif alternating with *koshtha-panjara* niches
maharajalila – a royal pose of sitting at ease
makara – the motif of a crocodile with a floriated tail
makara-torana – decorative arch emanating from the mouth of opposed *makaras* (crocodiles) over doorways
mandapa – the pillared and canopied hall
maharaja-lilasana – sitting posture with one leg folded at the hip, touching the thigh of the other, which hangs with the heels slightly raised above the pedestal which is touched only by the toe or a few fingers
maha-mandapa – large assembly hall
mukha-mandapa – the narrow hall connecting the *ardha-mandapa* or the *mandapa* with the shrine
naga – serpent demi-god living in the netherworld
naga-bandha – a pillar-decoration resembling the hood of a snake
natya-mandapa – dance hall
navagraha – nine planets
padmasana – a seated pose of ease with the legs crossed and soles turned up
padma-nidhi – dwarf attendant of Kubera holding a lotus in his hand
panjar – 'nest', a cage-like decorative motif for a niche or base
paryanka-bandha – legs bound in a strap for so they stay easily kept in a yogic meditation pose (cf. *yoga-patta*)
pasa – noose
prakara – enclosure wall
sala – a hut-shaped, barrel-roofed pavilion
sankha-nidhi – dwarf attendant of Kubera holding a conch in his hand
sula – spear or pointed weapon
tri-bhanga – triflex (in the standing pose of a figure)
trisula – trident
vajra – thunderbolt
vimana – the elevation of a shrine with the superstructure
yoga-patta – a band-strip for binding the legs in a mediation pose (cf. *paryanka-bandha*)
yajnopavita – sacred ceremonial thread
yaksha – nature spirit, could be benevolent or malefic, in Hindu and Buddhist mythology (female: *yakshi*)
yali – leograph.

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Madhugiri
Pileru
ANDHRA
Chintamani
Tumkur
Nandi
39
KARNATAKA
72
102
NH 4
66
Kolar
Hoskote
BANGALORE
Bangarapet
Kolar Gold Fields
Hosur
Ambur
119
NH 7
90
NH 46
Krishnagiri
Polur
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43
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108
Sivasamudram
Tiruvannamalai
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Dharmapuri
TAMIL NADU
Toppur
Tirukkovilu
67
Mettur Dam
Mettur
Yercaud
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Salem
Attur
Vriddh
58
Bhavani
NH 47
Erode
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Namakkal
Perambalur
GANG
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NH 45
Tiruppur
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Karur
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Srirangam
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NH 7
Tiruchirappalli
(Trichy)
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THAN.
(Tan
Dharapuram
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Palani
Dindigul
Pudukkottai
Kodaikkanal
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NH 49
Karaikkudi
Teni
Devakottai
Madurai

Sriharikota Island
Sri Kalahasti
Renigunta
Tirupati
PRADESH
Puttur
Tada
NH 5
Ponneri
Tiruttani
Tiruvallur
CHENNAI
St Thomas Mount
NH 4
Kanchipuram
Arani
Chengalpattu
Vedantangal Bird Sanctuary
Mahabalipuram
Vedantangal
Melmaruvathur
Gingee
Tindivanam
Marakkanam
Auroville
Viluppuram
PONDICHERRY (Puduchcheri)
Cuddalore
Neyveli
Pichavaram
Chidambaram
ONDACHOLAPURAM
Sirkazhi
Vaitheeswarankoil
Poompuhar
Tarangambadi (Tranquebar)
konam
DARASURAM
Karaikal
Nagore
Nagappattinam
JR
Calimere Wildlife & Bird Sanctuary
Vedaranniyam
Atirampattinam
Kodikkarai
LEGEND
State Capital
Other Towns
DARASURAM
Heritage Site
Inter-State Boundary
Railway Line
NH 1
National Highway
Other Roads
Airport
World Heritage Sites in India
1 Qutb Minar
2 Humayun's Tomb
3 Taj Mahal
4 Agra Fort
5 Fatehpur Sikri
6 Ajanta
7 Ellora
8 Elephanta
9 Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus
10 Champaner Pavagadh Archaeological Park
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DELHI
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Bhimbetka
MUMBAI
Konarak
Old Goa
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NH 7
Tiruchirappalli
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